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Faith and Learning: A Case Study of the Ouachita Baptist University Student Body

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SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

**“Faith and Learning: A Case Study of the Ouachita Baptist
University Student Body”**

written by

Amy Michelle Packer

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for completion of the
Carl Goodson Honors Program
meets the criteria for acceptance
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

December 9, 2005

The dawning of Christianity's third millennium finds many Christian colleges and universities in a search for identity. These institutions, once again, face the challenges of a new generation of students. In addition, they face a new postmodernist influence in scholarship and a declining influence of religion and churches in society. All present new context and new issues. Society's forward march will not permit a stable state for anything; it will not tolerate the status quo. Christian higher education must constantly confront the task of examining what it is and how it is to accomplish its mission in an increasingly secular academy. It must find a place to stand. Even then, any redefinition runs the risk of losing something valuable on the one hand, or being judged irrelevant on the other.

Anthony Diekema
*Academic Freedom & Christian Scholarship*¹

Introduction

With each new generation of students the Christian liberal arts university faces anew the question of how its faith tradition will influence its level of academic excellence. This question becomes increasingly challenging as society becomes more secularized. When the first universities were established in America, religion was considered the appropriate foundation of education. The work of George Marsden has shown, however, that by their very structure these universities would guarantee the eventual exclusion of religion altogether.² Many in the church-related university have similarly excluded religion from the academic environment. In the shadow of increasingly secular universities, the church-related university must establish its place as an institution which offers comparable levels of academic excellence while maintaining its own faith tradition. A Christian liberal arts university has the unique opportunity, if not responsibility, to offer its students not only the best education they can attain but also the ability to interact critically with both secular and faith-related ideas. This is the heart of how a university might integrate its faith with its learning.

In the above quotation, Anthony Diekema, president of Calvin College from 1976 to 1996, accurately explains the challenge a church-related university faces in trying to integrate its

¹ Anthony Diekema. *Academic Freedom & Christian Scholarship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 1.

² George Marsden. *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford Press, 1994), 31.

faith tradition with academic excellence. How the university confronts this challenge, and how they in turn view their faith tradition, can be determined by examining how each individual student will confront ideas of faith in the context of academia. Many students have never thought about this topic or have ignored it altogether as something that should bear little influence on their academic pursuits. Yet, as Diekema says, this is a discussion which their ever-changing generation has forced the university to address. Each student must respond in personal conviction as to the role that his faith will play in his chosen field of study. The university plays a large role in the student's conviction concerning this role.

My own experience as a student suggests that many, perhaps most, students do not understand the challenge facing church-related universities, nor do they show much interest in the topic. In my second year at Ouachita Baptist University I was a student in a Western Letters course, and the professor wrote letters to the students exploring various topics we had touched on in class. Perhaps more importantly, he included in these letters his thoughts about the subject in relation to Christian faith, a practice which I had not encountered under any other professor. After a class spent discussing Dante's *Inferno*, the professor asked us to think about how this picture affects us as people of faith, particularly as Christians. A heated conversation resulted during which, to my surprise, many students opposed the request, seemingly because they believed that one's faith is not meant to be discussed in conjunction with extra-biblical material.

At the end of class we received one of our professor's letters in regard to a previous assignment on Euripides' *Medea*. The question he posed was, "Why would we read the work *Medea* as Christians when it depicts such evil?"³ This question might have surprised me, but

³ I have included my response to this letter in Appendix A. This is so that the reader might have a clear idea of the direct response which I had to the event nearly two years ago. The reader will note that grammar and spelling mistakes have been retained.

what I had just discovered in our class period was that some were content to let their Christian faith be something private, set apart from all academic study. These students, neither stupid nor close minded, were genuinely trying to practice their faith. As I began to talk with many on the subject and read many books, I discovered that many of these students had learned from church and from society that it was not appropriate integrate one's faith with one's academic work.⁴

What was troubling was that instead of countering this belief, Ouachita seemed to be encouraging it. I believe that a Christian university has a responsibility to foster in its students the ability to think critically, not only as intellectuals, but as Christian intellectuals. If Ouachita was not doing this, but merely educating its students as any secular university would, then why does its advertising place such an emphasis on being a *Christian* university?

Primary Research

In order to answer the question of why many students at Ouachita were not comfortable discussing their faith with their chosen field of study, I decided to survey their attitudes and experiences on this topic. After some initial inquiries, I chose to replicate a survey which Baylor University had distributed to its students and faculty in 1999. Though the published results focus primarily on the faculty response, I found it more interesting to explore, in detail, the student response.⁵ I administered the survey by phone to 250 randomly selected students at Ouachita. My hope was that by determining their thoughts on the subjects of faith and learning, I would be able to draw conclusions about Ouachita as a whole.

⁴ For further information regarding the message which society is communicating see Diekema's book cited earlier; and Robert Beene *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with Their Religious Traditions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

⁵ See Larry Lyon and Michael Beaty *Integration, Secularization, and the Two-Spheres View at Religious Colleges: Comparing Baylor University with the University of Notre Dame and Georgetown College* The Christian Scholars Review, 1999, 73-112. Lyon and Beaty received a 37% response rate of their 1000 randomly selected students; I received a 25% response rate of my 250 randomly selected students. Each of these equaled about 3 % of the total student body. Students in the Ouachita survey were surveyed by phone.

The students at Ouachita come from various backgrounds and have various philosophies of learning, but the philosophy of learning that the university promotes profoundly influences their perception of reality and of the Christian life. I discovered through my survey that while modern scholarship has done much in recent years to analyze and define appropriate means of integrating faith and learning, Ouachita Baptist University's approach to this integration has remained unclear to students.⁶

In the following paragraphs I will present the various responses of the survey participants and what these in turn suggest about the university. Each student was asked to identify their hometown, school of study, classification, religious background, church attendance practice and his or her reason for attending Ouachita. Several of the cross tabulations done with each of these demographic questions were not statistically significant primarily due to the uniformity among the survey participants. Therefore I have chosen to only examine six questions in view of the participant's professed denomination and church-attendance practice and have included frequency tables for each of these questions. The reader may find a complete collection of the survey questions and frequency tables in the Appendix.⁷

The Survey

Part II Question #1 - The Mission Statement

The first question that I asked each participant was if they "endorsed" the University mission statement.⁸ Across denomination and church-attendance boundaries, the students answered "yes" with the exception of one person, an atheist student who chose not to endorse the

⁶ For information regarding modern scholarship on the topic of the integration of faith and learning, the reader may look at Appendix B.

⁷ The survey can be found in its entirety in Appendix C.

⁸ It is interesting that though the response was close to unanimous, many of the students asked to have the Mission Statement read to them because they had no idea what it said.

statement because of its recognition of Jesus Christ as Lord. It is significant for the University that most of the students chose to endorse the statement because this allows Ouachita to further institute this mission as it tries to influence how the students on campus approach the integration of their faith learning.

Table 1.1
Frequency table concerning the respondent's support for the OBU mission statement.

Endorse OBU Mission Statement?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	45	97.8	97.8	97.8
	No	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
Total		46	100.0	100.0	

This table demonstrates strong support for the ideas behind the institution's mission goals.

Part II Question #8 – Hiring Practices

Each student was asked whether he or she thought Ouachita should “hire faculty who have the highest degree of academic promise or prominence regardless of religious beliefs or commitments.” Twenty-two of the forty-six students surveyed agreed with this statement. Four of these students strongly agreed, and they consisted of Baptist students as well as an agnostic and atheist. Fifteen of the thirty-four Baptist students agreed, one strongly agreed, and of the remaining, four strongly disagreed.⁹ Of the four Methodist students only one disagreed, and all of those of other denominations chose to disagree as well.¹⁰ While it is not surprising that the largest religious group within the survey community is Baptist, it is interesting that this

⁹ Each student was asked to identify their “religious background.” Though several identified themselves as “Baptist” or as “Southern Baptist” we chose to make no distinction between these two responses. This was done in order to clearly communicate the results and because very little difference was seen in the way the two groups answered.

¹⁰ Students identified themselves as Non-denominational and Presbyterian. Two of the students identified themselves as just “Christian.” These referred to themselves as Christian as opposed to another religion, not as a member of the Christian denomination.

denominational affiliation seems to have divided the students rather than uniting them toward a common goal.¹¹

Among those students who claimed to attend church frequently or every chance possible, most disagreed with this statement (20/36).¹² In these results, I was able to see that though most who attended church disagreed with Ouachita hiring faculty regardless of each candidate's religious commitment, the line was not drawn among faithful or non-faithful lines of those who attend church and those who do not. Equally committed Christians disagree about this.

Table 1.2
Frequency table concerning hiring practices at Ouachita Baptist University

Hire Faculty who have highest academic promise, regardless of religious belief

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	4	8.7	8.7	8.7
	Agree	18	39.1	39.1	47.8
	Disagree	19	41.3	41.3	89.1
	Strongly Disagree	5	10.9	10.9	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

This table demonstrates the student's mixed opinions on the religious affiliation of faculty members.

Part II Question #9 – Right to question traditional Baptist beliefs and practices

Each of the students was asked again to either disagree or agree that faculty should be allowed to explore any idea or theory even if the results of these inquires question Baptist beliefs and practices. Only eleven of the forty-six students chose to disagree with this statement. Baptist students made up the largest group of those who disagreed while the others were Methodist or professed to be Christian. These ten students who disagreed with this freedom being given to the faculty each professed to attend church frequently or every chance possible. If the entire student

¹¹ A possible factor in the students' decision could be a misunderstanding of "religious beliefs" as referring to denomination such as Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian, rather than Christianity versus Judaism.

¹² Among those who only attend on special occasions or simply do not attend at all, six out of seven agreed with this statement (6/7).

body were surveyed, I believe that we would find this same percentage opposing this freedom being given to the faculty.¹³

Table 1.3
Frequency table concerning *Faculty Freedom*

Faculty Free to explore ideas that question traditional Baptist beliefs

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	11	23.9	23.9	23.9
Agree	24	52.2	52.2	76.1
Disagree	10	21.7	21.7	97.8
Strongly Disagree	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Most of the students chose to agree with this statement.

Part II Question #16 - Faith and learning are separate tasks and ought not to be integrated

Each student was asked if he agreed that “the encouragement of both faith and learning are important tasks; but these are separate tasks and ought not to be integrated.” This particular question comes close to evoking a unified response from the student body. Thirty-two of the forty-six students chose to disagree with this statement. Twenty-four of these were Baptist. All of the self-proclaimed Methodists disagreed, as well as the Christian, Presbyterian and Non-denominational students. As can be expected the agnostic and the atheist students agreed with the statement. As seen in earlier questions, I found it interesting that, other than the atheist and agnostic, it was only Baptist students who agree with this separation of faith and learning.

How did church attendance influence these decisions? My hypothesis was that those who attended church frequently would think that faith and learning should be integrated, while those who did not attend church very often thought faith and learning should be separated. Yet the

¹³ This introduces a variable among the students that might be labeled “fundamentalist.” In recent years Americans have observed many segments of the Southern Baptist convention becoming increasingly hostile to all beliefs outside of those traditionally identified as “Baptist.” It is my fear that those students who oppose faculty’s freedom to explore their Baptist beliefs might possibly be exemplifying this dangerous thread.

survey did not yield these expected results. All of those who do not attend church at all strongly agreed with the statement. Of those who said they attended frequently or every chance possible, nine out of thirty-six agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Those who only attended on special occasions disagreed. This is further evidence that those who oppose this integration are not people who oppose faith. Often they are those actively involved in their faith tradition.

Table 1.4
Frequency table concerning the integration of faith and learning

Faith and Learning Separate tasks-Ought not to be Integrated

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	4	8.7	8.7	8.7
	Agree	8	17.4	17.4	26.1
	Disagree	24	52.2	52.2	78.3
	Strongly Disagree	8	17.4	17.4	95.7
	No Opinion	2	4.3	4.3	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Majority of the students were not in favor of complete separation of faith and learning.

Part II Question #18 - It is possible to achieve Academic Excellence and maintain a Christian identity

Each student was asked to either agree or disagree that “it is possible for Ouachita to achieve academic excellence and maintain a Christian Identity.” Similar to the student response when asked about their endorsement of the mission statement, each student agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.¹⁴ This is interesting since many had already agreed that this Christian identity should be separated from their learning. It might be possible that this response was influenced by the context of the situation. If one is currently going to a Christian school, he wants his education to be valuable; therefore he claims it is valuable so that it might have value. It might also show that the students genuinely believe academic excellence can be achieved in

¹⁴ The reader should know that many hesitated in their answer and had an option for “I don’t know” or “don’t care” been present, several might have chosen this option.

light of Christian identity. If the students at Ouachita did not believe that any university can achieve academic excellence while maintaining their Christian identity, then I believe the university would have a very different problem. The response to this question, however, should encourage the University to take the necessary steps to better integrate its faith with increasingly high levels of academic excellence.

Table 1.5
Frequency table concerning university's Christian Identity

Possible to achieve academic excellence and maintain Christian Identity					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	27	58.7	58.7	58.7
	Agree	19	41.3	41.3	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

All students agreed that a university can achieve academic excellence and maintain a Christian Identity.

Part II Question #19- It is possible to achieve Academic Excellence and maintain a Baptist Identity

The final question addressed whether or not it is possible “to achieve academic excellence and maintain a *Baptist* identity.” Much to my disappointment several of the students thought that this question was redundant, an alternate way to ask about a school’s Christian identity. Yet a few did recognize a difference between the Baptist tradition and the Christian faith. Did denomination or church attendance have any bearing on the three individuals who disagreed with the possibility of a school achieving academic excellence and maintaining a Baptist identity? One of these students was Baptist, one was Methodist and the other claimed no religion. The two of the Christian faith claimed to go to church frequently or every chance possible, while the other did not attend any church. So why did these three individuals choose this option? It is possible that the Baptist individual recognized increased hostility to new ideas which has arisen in many circles of the Baptist denomination. It is possible also that the

Methodist student recognized that in recent years the Southern Baptist Convention has been marked by a stark close-minded fundamentalism. The student who claimed no religion might have recognized something on Ouachita's campus which has given her reason to doubt the future of the Baptist faith tradition as conducive to academic excellence. Though the reasoning of each of these individuals is not known for certain, it is significant that these disagreed. Ouachita must consider that though these believe the Christian identity can work in conjunction with academic excellence, they expressed belief that the Baptist denomination cannot.

Table 1.6
Frequency table concerning university's Baptist identity

Possible to achieve academic excellence and maintain a Baptist Identity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	14	30.4	30.4	30.4
	Agree	29	63.0	63.0	93.5
	Disagree	2	4.3	4.3	97.8
	Strongly Disagree	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Three students disagreed that it is possible to achieve academic excellence and maintain a Baptist identity.

Closing Remarks

In his *Academic Freedom and Christian Scholarship*, Anthony Diekema records the definition for Catholic universities provided by Pope John Paul II in terms of four necessary characteristics. The first is Christian inspiration, not only in the individual but in the university community. The second was a continuing reflection, in light of their faith heritage, upon the “growing treasury of human knowledge,” to which they must contribute their own research. The third is a fidelity to the Christian message as they have inherited it from the church.¹⁵ The final characteristic is “an institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life.”¹⁶ According to John Paul these will ensure a Christian perspective that will effectively confront the problems of society and culture in the university. Going further he advocates four essential guidelines that these characteristics will encourage the university to uphold: “(1) the search for the integration of knowledge; (2) a dialogue between faith and reason; (3) an ethical concern, and (4) a theological perspective.”¹⁷ I believe John Paul’s guidelines are essential for any university of a faith tradition because they embody what a secular education will not communicate to its students.

I believe Ouachita Baptist University has failed to integrate faith and learning effectively on campus, and in doing so has communicated to its students that faith is unimportant in the context of academia. The responses to the six questions that I chose to discuss in the above section suggest that students are not hearing a clear message from the university, but are left to

¹⁵ Protestants typically do not believe in the sovereignty of the church as Catholics do. What I find of value in this statement is not that the church has authority, but that the faculty shows fidelity to the Christian message, as they read in scripture. This is valuable for all universities of a faith-tradition.

¹⁶ Characteristics as reported in Diekema, 57.

¹⁷ Ibid., 58.

decide on their own how and to what extent it is important that their faith impact their education. This would, in fact, be an appropriate way for the student to confront the issue if the university was communicating the importance of doing so. However, oftentimes the student does not make a decision about how their faith will impact their knowledge because he has learned from the university that it does not really matter. I believe Ouachita Baptist University has the responsibility to offer the student something that he cannot attain elsewhere, a clear integration of their faith with their chosen field of study.

In this section I will discuss two trends which I found in the results of my survey: (1) Those students of the Baptist denomination appeared to be confused in the way that they answered, and (2) despite this confusion, the student response seems to show support for further action which the University can take to better communicate its approach to integrating faith with learning. Following these discussions, I conclude with steps I hope Ouachita will take in the coming years.

It is interesting that, among the survey participants, many who professed to be Baptist seemed to see no distinction between what is Christian and what is Baptist. I have also observed this same belief being expressed in other venues on campus and off. In its conception the Baptist denomination was marked by a willingness to discuss conflicting ideas without persecuting those with whom they disagreed. Yet, in recent years the Southern Baptist faith has become marked by a fundamentalism that has earned them a label as a close-minded denomination. In addition to this perceived opposition to new ideas, the denomination has also gained a reputation for opposing higher education. It is a common tale among many students that their pastors encourage their congregation to not waste their time with educating themselves, but to trust in

the Spirit for their success.¹⁸ This teaches the congregation that any education they gain does not aid their faith and could even prove harmful to the Spirit's work in their lives. I believe this sets the stage for the reluctance that students demonstrate when asked to integrate their faith with their academic pursuit.

Despite this reluctance that many students have in relating their faith with their learning, the affirmative answers to the survey questions seem to suggest that these students desire this integration. They, indeed, believe that a school can achieve academic excellence and maintain a Christian identity. Most believe this can also be done while maintaining a Baptist identity. They support the mission statement which offers a very clear rationale for the university to move toward clear integration. Many also expressed a general belief that faith and learning should not be separated.¹⁹ Yet these encouraging opinions appear to be coupled with an equal hesitation toward an integration the student has been taught very little about. The students are not being told that the integration of their faith with their learning is not only important, but is a responsibility for all Christians. This is the message that I believe Ouachita needs to communicate more clearly to their students.

Before concluding I would like to challenge the view that a university that is Christian cannot sustain academic excellence. A Christian university that forsakes scholarship for the sake of being Christian has failed in their mission both as a university and as a representative of the Christian heritage. Bob R. Agee writes, "If an institution neglects the pursuit of genuine academic excellence in the pursuit of integrating the Christian faith into the academic disciplines

¹⁸ I have come across this trend among Baptists through classes taken here at Ouachita, conversations with faculty and students, as well as reading several news releases.

¹⁹ In answer to question #16 many expressed belief that faith and learning should not be separated. This is encouraging but is only the first step to achieving complete integration.

and into the teaching learning process, the institution will fail both its faith heritage and its students.”²⁰ A Christian is not called to a faith that dulls the mind but one that stimulates it and calls for the believer to actively learn as an act of worship. Arthur Holmes, in his *The Idea of the Christian College*, writes, “Somehow or other the student must realize that education is a Christian vocation, one’s prime calling from God for these years, that education must be an act of love, of worship, of stewardship, a wholehearted response to God.”²¹ It is an act of worship when we pursue God not only with our hearts but with our minds.

Not only are Christians called to educate themselves and to renew their minds, but they are called to do it well. Diekema writes, “A Christian College is distinguished by its pursuit of a pervasive Christian excellence in all of its activities, but guided by a well-articulated worldview within an expanded statement of institutional mission.”²² The student at the Christian university that is faithful to its heritage, will not only excel but will demonstrate a marked advantage over those outside of faith in his or her ability to not only recognize the relationship of their Christian existence to Christian thought, but also be able to interact critically with the world around them.²³ This is the Christian approach that I believe Ouachita should be encouraging.

As Ouachita continues to admit new students and offer new programs of academic study, I believe that in order to retain its faith-tradition, it is necessary that it promote a clearer integration of faith and learning. Students will learn from their alma mater what really matters in life. If Ouachita communicates a lax or uninterested approach to the inclusion of faith in

²⁰ Bob R. Agee. “Christian Faith and the Academic Disciplines: Finding the Right Context for Discussion”, *The Southern Baptist Educator* (Volume LXIX, No. 2), 9.

²¹ Arthur Holmes. *The Idea of a Christian College* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 49.

²² Diekema, 58.

²³ Diekema, 61.

academic discipline, then it is quite possible that the students will do likewise in their future pursuits, academic or otherwise. If, however, the university chooses to promote a clear integration of faith with learning that teaches the student to critically interact with her environment in an informed but Christian-minded manner, then this is what the student will likely value as he or she pursues other venues in the future. Holmes writes,

The educated Christian exercises critical judgment and manifests the ability to interpret and to evaluate information, particularly in the light of the Christian revelation. In a word, if she is to act creatively and to speak with cogency and clarity to the minds of her fellows, the educated Christian must be at home in the world of ideas and people. Christians, unfortunately, often talk to themselves.²⁴

I urge Ouachita to be a university that encourages students to exercise “critical judgment” as they interpret and evaluate information in light of this faith. In doing so, I also urge them not to produce Christians who can only talk with Christians on matters of faith, but those who can converse with people with diverse beliefs, because they are “at home in the world of ideas and people.” As Ouachita produces students with the ability to do as Holmes suggests, I believe it will find that its doors will be flooded with many more students who find something “extra” in the education they receive from Ouachita Baptist University.

²⁴ Holmes, 5.

Medea as Christians when it depicts such evil?"³ This question might have surprised me, but what I had just discovered in our class period was that some were content to let their Christian faith be something private, set apart from all academic study. These students, neither stupid nor close minded, were genuinely trying to practice their faith. As I began to talk with many on the subject and read many books, I discovered that many of these students had learned from church and from society that it was not appropriate integrate one's faith with one's academic work.⁴ What was troubling was that instead of countering this belief, Ouachita seemed to be encouraging it. I believe that a Christian university has a responsibility to foster in its students the ability to think critically, not only as intellectuals, but as Christian intellectuals. If Ouachita was not doing this, but merely educating its students as any secular university would, then why does its advertising place such an emphasis on being a *Christian* university?

Primary Research

In order to answer the question of why many students at Ouachita were not comfortable discussing their faith with their chosen field of study, I decided to survey their attitudes and experiences on this topic. After some initial inquiries, I chose to replicate a survey which Baylor University had distributed to its students and faculty in 1999. Though the published results focus primarily on the faculty response, I found it more interesting to explore, in detail, the student response.⁵ I administered the survey by phone to 250 randomly selected students at Ouachita. My

³ I have included my response to this letter in Appendix A. This is so that the reader might have a clear idea of the direct response which I had to the event nearly two years ago. The reader will note that grammar and spelling mistakes have been retained.

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⁵ See Larry Lyon and Michael Beaty *Integration, Secularization, and the Two-Spheres View at Religious Colleges: Comparing Baylor University with the University of Notre Dame and Georgetown College* *The Christian Scholars Review*, 1999, 73-112. Lyon and Beaty received a 37% response rate of their 1000 randomly selected

Appendix A – Letter to Professor

Dear ,

I am writing this letter, not for a graded assignment, but instead merely to offer my input. On your response to our Reading Responses, under number three, you posed a question. Why would we read *Medea* as Christians when it contains such incredibly descriptive pictures of true evil? I have not sought to answer this question but to rather offer my opinion. I realize that many will believe whatever they choose to believe and that nothing I say can convince them otherwise, so I do not seek to change their minds but I do wish to express my views on the subject.

Medea is a story of an incredibly evil woman. She says evil things, comes from evil people and kills others in an evil way. I believe that all humans, both Christians and non-Christians, react to this story quite differently than to other works of the same genre. Excluding the percentage who get some sort of thrill from the evil, I believe, as humans, we react negatively to it. But one thing we do as Christians that others do not do, is we say that since it brings about this negative reaction in us we should stay away from it, put it away and not read it again. We believe it is no longer valuable literature and declare it as wrong. Many great works of literature are being banned from Christian forums and I believe a great deal of scholarship and just plain enjoyment is being lost among Christian students. I believe that despite the evil story depicted in *Medea*, it is a form of literature that should be greatly valued among us as students. Aside from its being written beautifully, *Medea* presents evil at its best. I believe we, as Christians, need to know that exactly it is that we are opposing and fighting against. I am not trying to say that we should go and embrace the world fully, because we are called to be apart of the world but not *of* the world. But we are not to sit in our own little "holy-clan", refusing to have anything to do with the world either. What better way to learn about the evil we are fighting than to read about it?

My need to express these views was brought about in class today as we discussed heaven and hell. I observed that many were uncomfortable with discussing the subject and chose answers that would quickly stop the conversation. You see, in our Christian society today, it seems as if we have made it a sin to question God. It would, to some, present the feeling of doubt and of disbelief. I do not believe this way. I believe that to question God is to merely admit that we are human and that we are sub-creatures who do not know everything there is to know about Him. What better way to get to know another person than to ask them questions about themselves. We are often wrong when we make assumptions about each other, what makes us think that we are not wrong when we make assumptions about God? I have seen many students at Ouachita come dangerously close-minded to the idea of discussing their religion and I am praying that this wall would be torn down.

I do not know if this letter made sense. I just felt a burden to get this out on paper. I am in no way trying to tear down the students here at Ouachita. They are wonderful people, with wonderful goals and generally wonderful minds for learning. But it scares me when bright students who seem to love the Lord refuse to talk to our God. He is a God who cares about us and about our feelings. We can go to Him with questions, I believe He wants that. For to never question Him is to miss out on the experience of truly knowing Him.

Thank you for this chance to express my feelings, although you did not actually assign this.

I am enjoying Western Letters thoroughly. Thank you for the selfless guidance you provide in this class.

Have a Great day!

Sincerely,
Amy Packer

Appendix B - Bibliography

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Appendix C—Survey Material

Student information

Name:

Official Classification:

Phone Number:

Surveyed? Yes Call Back Was not interested

Hi, my name is (fill in name here) and I have been asked to survey a random selection of students on behalf of Amy Packer, a senior here at Ouachita. This survey is apart of her Carl Goodson Honors Program Thesis.

You were apart of a random selection of students which computer services submitted to us.

If you have the time I would like to ask you a few questions.

Your answers will be kept confidential and this should take about 10 minutes.

Part I – General Information

1. M / F (circle one)
2. Major
3. Minor
4. Hometown:
5. Size of community:
6. Religious background
7. Church Attendance: (circle one)
 - a. frequent (every Sunday)
 - b. every chance possible
 - c. Special occasions
 - d. not at all
8. Reason for choosing to attend Ouachita Baptist University
 - a. Christian school with Christian values
 - b. Had specific major which you required / desired
 - c. Financial support available
 - d. Family history of attending OBU
 - e. other

Part II – Faith and Learning Knowledge

- 1) Do you endorse the mission statement?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

To What Extent Should [Ouachita] emphasize the following Goals?

- 2) Advancing Knowledge through research?
 - a) Maximum possible emphasis
 - b) Moderate emphasis
 - c) Minimum emphasis
 - d) Should not be a goal
- 3) Extending Knowledge through undergraduate teaching?
 - a) Maximum possible emphasis
 - b) Moderate emphasis
 - c) Minimum emphasis
 - d) Should not be a goal
- 4) Extending Knowledge through graduate teaching?
 - a) Maximum possible emphasis
 - b) Moderate emphasis
 - c) Minimum emphasis
 - d) Should not be a goal
- 5) Training students for productive careers?
 - a) Maximum possible emphasis
 - b) Moderate emphasis
 - c) Minimum emphasis
 - d) Should not be a goal
- 6) Encouraging students' moral development?
 - a) Maximum possible emphasis
 - b) Moderate emphasis
 - c) Minimum emphasis
 - d) Should not be a goal
- 7) Developing students' sense of civic responsibility?
 - a) Maximum possible emphasis
 - b) Moderate emphasis
 - c) Minimum emphasis
 - d) Should not be a goal

To Meet Its Academic and Faith- Related Goals, [Ouachita] should:

- 8) Hire faculty who have the highest levels of academic promise or prominence, regardless of religious beliefs or commitments.
 - a) Strongly agree
 - b) agree
 - c) disagree
 - d) strongly disagree

- 9) Guarantee its faculty the freedom to explore any idea or theory and to publish the results of those inquiries, even if the ideas question some traditional Baptist beliefs and practices.
- Strongly agree
 - agree
 - disagree
 - strongly disagree
- 10) Require specific academic courses designed to help students think more critically about their moral commitments.
- Strongly agree
 - agree
 - disagree
 - strongly disagree
- 11) Require courses designed to help students think more critically about their civic responsibilities.
- Strongly agree
 - agree
 - disagree
 - strongly disagree
- 12) Require courses that provide technical, work-related skills relevant to a successful career.
- Strongly agree
 - agree
 - disagree
 - strongly disagree
- 13) Require courses in the scholarly study of the Bible, such as Old and New Testament surveys.
- Strongly agree
 - agree
 - disagree
 - strongly disagree
- 14) Provide an academic environment that encourages students to develop a well-thought-out philosophy of life.
- Strongly agree
 - agree
 - disagree
 - strongly disagree
- 15) Provide an academic environment that encourages students to develop a well-thought-out Christian philosophy of life.
- Strongly agree
 - agree
 - disagree
 - strongly disagree

A major question confronting a school like [Ouachita] is the degree to which faith and learning should be related. (For example, should religious beliefs influence the choice of topics teacher explore with their class, the way they teach the material, or the way they do their research?)

- 16) Since [Ouachita] strives to be a Christian college, the encouragement of both faith and learning are important tasks; but these are separate tasks and ought not to be integrated.
- Strongly agree
 - agree
 - disagree
 - strongly disagree

- 17) To help integrate faith and learning, some courses in [Ouachita's] general education curriculum, beyond those in religion, should include discussions of Christian perspectives: (check all those with which you agree)
- a) on God
 - b) on the nature of the universe
 - c) on society
 - d) on human beings
 - e) as opportunities arise in the various disciplines, but not systematically, in most disciplines.
- 18) It is possible for [Ouachita] to achieve academic excellence and maintain a Christian Identity.
- a) Strongly agree
 - b) agree
 - c) disagree
 - d) strongly disagree
- 19) It is possible to achieve academic excellence and maintain a Baptist identity.
- a) Strongly agree
 - b) agree
 - c) disagree
 - d) strongly disagree

Frequency Tables

Sex of Respondent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	22	47.8	47.8	47.8
	Female	24	52.2	52.2	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Endorse OBU Mission Statement?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	45	97.8	97.8	97.8
	No	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Advance Knowledge through Research?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Maximum Possible Emphasis	20	43.5	43.5	43.5
	Moderate Emphasis	25	54.3	54.3	97.8
	Minimum Emphasis	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Extend Knowledge through Undergraduate Study?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Maximum Possible Emphasis	25	54.3	54.3	54.3
	Moderate Emphasis	12	26.1	26.1	80.4
	Minimum Emphasis	6	13.0	13.0	93.5
	Should Not Be A Goal	3	6.5	6.5	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Extend Knowledge through Graduate Study?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Maximum Possible Emphasis	24	52.2	52.2	52.2
	Moderate Emphasis	14	30.4	30.4	82.6
	Minimum Emphasis	4	8.7	8.7	91.3
	Should Not Be A Goal	4	8.7	8.7	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Require courses to help students think about Moral Commitments

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	15	32.6	32.6	32.6
	Agree	28	60.9	60.9	93.5
	Disagree	3	6.5	6.5	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Require courses to help students think about Civic Responsibilities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	9	19.6	19.6	19.6
	Agree	33	71.7	71.7	91.3
	Disagree	4	8.7	8.7	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Require courses that provide Technical, Work-Related Skills for Career

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	15	32.6	32.6	32.6
	Agree	26	56.5	56.5	89.1
	Disagree	3	6.5	6.5	95.7
	No Opinion	2	4.3	4.3	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Require courses in scholarly study of the Bible

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	12	26.1	26.1	26.1
	Agree	27	58.7	58.7	84.8
	Disagree	7	15.2	15.2	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Provide academic environment to develop well-thought-out philosophy of life

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	23	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Agree	23	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Provide academic environment to develop well-thought-out Christian philosophy of life

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	24	52.2	52.2	52.2
Agree	18	39.1	39.1	91.3
Disagree	3	6.5	6.5	97.8
No Opinion	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Faith and Learning Separate tasks-Ought not to be Integrated

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	4	8.7	8.7	8.7
Agree	8	17.4	17.4	26.1
Disagree	24	52.2	52.2	78.3
Strongly Disagree	8	17.4	17.4	95.7
No Opinion	2	4.3	4.3	100.0
Total	46	100.0	100.0	

GE courses should include discussion of Christian perspective on God

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	40	87.0	87.0	87.0
No	6	13.0	13.0	100.0
Total	46	100.0	100.0	

GE courses should include discussion of Christian perspective on nature of Universe

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	41	89.1	89.1	89.1
No	5	10.9	10.9	100.0
Total	46	100.0	100.0	

GE courses should include discussion of Christian perspective on one Society

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	42	91.3	91.3	91.3
No	4	8.7	8.7	100.0
Total	46	100.0	100.0	

**GE courses should include discussion of Christian perspective on
Human Beings**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	39	84.8	84.8	84.8
	No	7	15.2	15.2	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

**GE courses should include discussion of Christian perspective as
opportunities Arise**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	39	84.8	84.8	84.8
	No	7	15.2	15.2	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Possible to achieve academic excellence and maintain Christian Identity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	27	58.7	58.7	58.7
	Agree	19	41.3	41.3	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Possible to achieve academic excellence and maintain a Baptist Identity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	14	30.4	30.4	30.4
	Agree	29	63.0	63.0	93.5
	Disagree	2	4.3	4.3	97.8
	Strongly Disagree	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Grade Classification

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Freshman	16	34.8	34.8	34.8
	Sophomore	7	15.2	15.2	50.0
	Junior	4	8.7	8.7	58.7
	Senior	19	41.3	41.3	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

School of Respondent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Education	5	10.9	11.4	11.4
	Humanities	8	17.4	18.2	29.5
	<i>Natural Sciences</i>	7	15.2	15.9	45.5
	Social Sciences	7	15.2	15.9	61.4
	Christian Studies	4	8.7	9.1	70.5
	Business	6	13.0	13.6	84.1
	Fine Arts	7	15.2	15.9	100.0
	Total	44	95.7	100.0	
Missing	9	2	4.3		
Total		46	100.0		