20 ideas for higher education
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Across the Street
Across the Street

Purchase or build a Christian living center or
learning center “across the street” from a major public
university.

Rent the center to Christian students, or even to
Christians working in the area.

Charge competitive rental fees and use a break-even
financial model. Use either a not-for-profit or for-profit
financial strategy.
Benefits of your living/learning center include the following:

- Safe, clean residential housing
- Christian spiritual formation mentors
- Specialized library
- Life coaches (maybe InterVarsity, Cru or other staff)
- Classes
- Amenities

Let's look at the classes and amenities in more detail.

Classes

Offer several on-site classes from the (public) university's catalog. Arrange for Christian faculty from the nearby public university to teach these classes, especially those who yearn to teach more openly from their Christian worldview.

Amenities

Leave the funding headaches of the amenities “arms race” behind.
Let the public university provide the majority of courses as well as amenities:

- the main library
- science labs
- performing arts
- physical fitness centers
- competitive athletics
- other things most students want

If you’re a stronger institution, use this idea as an add-on for greater Kingdom impact or an alternative to existing campuses.
Across the Country
Across the Country

Expand beyond your institution’s home site and plant a second campus somewhere else.

This idea is already familiar to colleges and universities that set up satellite campuses a few miles away or thousands of miles across the country.

Add a campus near a hospital or near a concentration of churches.
Consider these opportunities as you look for a place to expand across the country:

- Near Non-Christian Campuses
- Near Hospital Systems
- In Growing Cities
- Near Church Groups
- In Warmer Climates

Let’s look at each of these opportunities in more detail.

Near Non-Christian Campuses

There are cities without Christian institutions that desire to have one or desire to add more.

Near Hospitals

There are hospital systems that will subsidize campuses to come near them for various health care programs.
**In Growing Cities**

Some cities are now competing to attract campuses, believing good cities have college campuses.

**Near Church Groups**

Many denominations have concentrations of churches in parts of the country where there is no nearby campus to serve their interests.

**In Warmer Climates**

Northern campuses may want a warmer climate for their students and faculty to consider spending a semester.
Across the World
Across the World

Partner with the right foreign campus or build one from scratch, providing student education, living, and learning in another (lower-cost) culture.

A foreign campus could benefit your institution by:

- Attracting students who desire to study abroad
- Supporting your missions emphasis
- Encouraging international enrollment
- Offering a blended class-online format

Let’s look at each benefit in more detail.
Attract students who desire to study abroad

How many of your incoming freshman want to study abroad?

Some studies show at least 50% of all incoming freshmen today say they want to study abroad.

Only 3% actually get the opportunity. Your institution could grow just by giving your students that opportunity.

Support your missions emphasis

Many Christian campuses have strong missions organizations and churches with whom they could collaborate.

Why not show your support by setting up a campus near a foreign mission field?
Encourage international enrollment

Having a campus overseas fosters an intercultural environment that draws more students from around the world.

Offer a blended class-online format

Courses or programs combining in-class participation and online instruction may help your faculty reach both campuses.

The Across the World idea fits with the increasingly popular concept of globalization.
In the Marketplace
In the Marketplace

Create co-op programs for students or graduates to work in the community or local marketplace.

Provide these opportunities as optional or required courses, or provide them to qualified graduates.

Resulting resumes will show meaningful job experiences in addition to a college degree.
Creative ways you can implement this moving your students into the marketplace:

- Job Guarantee
- Job or Refund
- Partner with alumni or friends
- Partner with employers
- Locally-based certificates or degrees

Let’s look at each in more detail.

**Job Guarantee**

“Guarantee” a job for the first year out of college for those who do not land one on their own.

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**Job or Refund**

Refund the last year’s tuition those those who are not placed in a job within six months.

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**Partner with alumni or friends**

Tap committed alumni or friends who support this concept to provide those jobs.

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**Partner with employers**

Be open to partnerships with large employers in your community.
Locally-based certificates or degrees

Build the program around a solid general education core, but offer degrees and certificates that reflect the region's economic future and student career interests.
Work to Learn
Work to Learn

Combine practical skills and formal instruction for students in maintenance, management, and food service programs.

Reduce non-teaching payroll at the same time.

In the Work to Learn idea, students will learn by building and maintaining campus facilities, managing businesses, and growing food.

Create hands-on courses in maintenance, management, and food service.
Consider the benefits of work to learn:

- Reduce non-teaching payroll
- Attract hands-on learners
- Attract retired professionals
- Attract like-minded donors

Let’s look at each in detail.

Attract hands-on learners

Some students learn better in a real-life environment. Working and learning under Christian adults who both model character and share practical experience could make it a “destination campus” for hands-on learners and for the more industrial degrees.

Reduce non-teaching payroll

With students doing more of the maintenance work around campus, there will be less staff needed to fill those positions.

Attract retired professionals

Many retired professionals may desire to live and work in this environment, where they can bring both extensive experience and teaching abilities onto campus.
Attract like-minded donors

While Berea College, College of the Ozarks, and a few others still exist today, the work-college model has many advantages, especially in the minds of donors!

Advantages for donors:

► Help students set a life course for success. Donors will see their dollars directly benefit students in changing their lives and setting the trajectory of their family into a different direction, not funding their sports scholarship. See an example: http://www.berea.edu/give-to-berea/the-berea-fund/why-give-to-berea/

► Help students climb out of poverty. Most work colleges help students who coming out of poverty. For these students, getting a degree is truly an attainment for them. See the outcome here: http://www.berea.edu/give-to-berea/tevin/

► Impact the lives of students: https://www.cofo.edu/Page/Giving-To-C-of-O.18.html

Try this message on prospective students: “Leave campus without debt and a unique resume!”
Multi-campus System
Multi-campus System

Explore joining together with another institution that is compatible with your school’s denomination.

Together, create a multi-campus system that shares:

- one strong board
- a central administration
- cooperative purchasing capacity
- easy transfer of students
- faculty mobility among the campuses
- leveraging of technology
- specialized majors of each campus
- centers of excellence on each campus

Share technology, faculty, and more with a similar denomination’s campus.
If it works for public universities, maybe we need more multi-campus Christian universities offering a range of programs and degrees.

There is actual experience in multi-campus systems from which we can to learn.
All Web
Since the church is growing most rapidly in the Southern Hemisphere, we need one or more Christian universities to provide educational opportunities for kingdom impact.

**How long distance learning could work:**

- Classes meet in local churches
- Classes are taught online
- Students are guided by course mentors

Open an online campus in third-world countries or missionary settlements.
Set up your online “campus” in the local church or school building with course instruction delivered via the web or other distance learning tool.

Have on-site paid or volunteer “course mentors” to guide students. Course mentors can also guide via email and social networking if they are scattered around the globe.

Besides class time guidance, organize additional “study groups” in major cities to bring people together.

**Partnership websites**

With Coursera, Udacity and many other new online ventures, there might be other good partnership opportunities with a global reach.

**Learn from others**

Perhaps one of the strong, proven online universities would provide the expensive online courseware and management system, allowing the leadership to focus on the more important strategies of transformation.
Use a nonprofit strategy to appeal to many donors or a for-profit model to appeal to investors.

While totally online is not the perfect model, the All Web model does have the potential to reach hundreds of thousands of Christians who may never have the option to learn from a Christian worldview.
Residential + Others’ Online Courses
Residential + Others’ Online Courses

Satisfy degree requirements of prominent, accredited institutions by finding and arranging online courses from other Christian colleges or universities.

Think about designing the best “co-curricular” program possible that could be implemented on several new “campuses” to leverage the power of Christian community.

Arrange local programs using online courses from other institutions.
Maybe several such communities could be centrally managed.

Then tap MOOCs and Christian campuses’ online courses to meet one or more host, regionally accredited universities’ degree requirements.

This holistic model could significantly “transform” lives in community settings by drawing heavily on local churches, parachurch ministries, businesses led by Christians, etc.

**Benefits students**

The benefit for students would be to significantly reduce the cost of certificates or degrees without giving up the critical nature of living and learning in a Christian community.
Commuter Blended + Others' Online Courses
Commuter Blended + Others’ Online Courses

Create meaningful activities for online, on-their-own students by organizing co-curricular classes in local churches or community halls.

Imagine dozens (or hundreds) of “mini-campuses” using space in churches and other donated space properties for online students who live on their own to gather and create meaningful “co-curricular” activities while they accumulate credits from several online offerings.
This model would need “founders” to create the infrastructure that could then easily be hosted by local leaders in communities of all sizes across America or the world.

**Cost to students**

The cost to students would be less than most community colleges.

Plus, it would allow them to work and live in their own homes, yet have meaningful “student life” activities that fit the cohort.

This model would fit communities with concentrations of ethnic and racial minorities that are under represented at most Christian campuses.

It's a natural way to encourage living and learning in a Christian community.
For Profit
Offer working adults efficient and competitive Christian higher education by creating a subsidiary for-profit or teaming up with an existing for-profit.

To realize the efficiencies and focus on working adults similar to the 800 fully accredited, degree granting for-profit campuses, we need Christian investors and educators to provide adult degrees from a Christian worldview in this market.
Currently, Grand Canyon University (Phoenix) is one strong model.

A stronger model may be for an existing nonprofit campus to create or purchase a subsidiary for-profit so the profits would go to the parent nonprofit institution rather than to private investors (keep your eye on Azusa Pacific Online University).

Many Christians are squeamish about education being a “business,” but more exposure to for-profit institutions may reduce the skepticism.

With more than 125 million formal learners in the U.S., and only 18 million of those counted as enrolled in “higher education,” the market is huge.

And some educators have the skills and instincts to take a responsive, entrepreneurial model to new markets of learners.

Another strategy would be for a nonprofit campus to “co-brand” itself with a for-profit, sharing some tuition revenue with a good for-profit that has good systems already in place and working well.
Adopt Your Town
Adopt Your Town

Make your town a model place to live and work. Create experience-based, service-oriented coursework fitted to the needs and opportunities of the local community.

Some Christian institutions are in small towns or cities of less than 25,000 residents.

Imagine an existing campus “adopting” the town – a vision to make it a model place to live and work.

Fit service-oriented coursework for needs in your local community.
This model would emphasize experiential and service learning.

Students would volunteer or be employed in every aspect of community life, such as

- environment
- health
- schools
- businesses
- nonprofits
- churches
- clubs

Faculty would align coursework with community needs and opportunities.

There would be more independent study projects.

This kind of “destination campus” would likely attract students from small towns who may want to settle in their campus town or a town similar to it.

Imagine!
2 Year or Less Programs
2 Year or Less Programs

Help working adults meet their non-traditional educational goals by offering 6-month, 1-year, or 2-year programs for certificates and associate’s degrees.

Half the freshmen in the United States attend a community college.

Many people, especially those who prefer to work and learn at the same time, have educational goals that could be completed through a badge, certificate or degree.

Offer 6-month, 1-year, & 2-year certificates and associate’s degrees.
associate’s degree program.

If 30-40% of American adults are evangelical, and a high percentage of them want only a 6-month certificate or a two-year degree, where can they go today where faculty and administrators see them as the primary student body and offer what they want at a price they can afford?

Maybe such a campus would offer only a portion of the credits, while the student also attended the public community college a few miles away or next door.

Where can evangelical adults go today where education is suited for their schedules and price range?
3 Year Programs
3 Year Programs

Create a 3-year program for highly motivated students, which may include the following strategies:

- offer summer or winter terms
- offer online classes
- encourage high school seniors to earn credits before entering college

Eventually, Europe may bring pressure to bear on the U.S. to compete with three-year undergraduate degrees.
A few campuses are experimenting now.

As a distinctive, Christian colleges would need some “guarantee” that certain majors could be accomplished in three years for highly motivated students.

Maybe high school graduates bringing earned credits with them would be needed. Most likely, students would need to be enrolled twelve months a year.

Could a three-year degree thrive in a traditional four-year campus?

It holds many attractions for some students.
Network
Network

Offer a wider variety of degrees that many students desire by networking and combining the strengths of multiple campuses.

Few campuses can individually fund all the courses or majors their students desire.

Develop a network of campuses that will market one another’s best courses and majors by co-branding or offering degree programs under a larger, collaborative name.
Students might live on one campus but travel to other campuses for a term or two.

Courses could use interactive video, in-class, or online.

One partner could be http://christianuniversityglobalnet.com.

A group representing all the institutions would provide governance/leadership for the shared curriculum so the administrative functions could be coordinated efficiently.
Integrator

Customize or improve student learning by building on the knowledge and resources of faculty from other institutions.

To create robust courses, today’s faculty integrate into their classes various resources, such as

- articles
- books
- videos
- websites
Push that concept further to articulation agreements with other colleges, including:

- community colleges
- public four-year institutions
- private four-year institutions

Tap the widest range of possibilities. Go even further with assessments of learning from the best-in-class:

- conferences
- seminars
- apprenticeships
- internships
- travel, etc

Pro-actively customize the best learning experience for each student based on interest and learning style.
Dual BA-MA
5 Year Program
Dual BA-MA 5 Year Program

Save time and money for students aiming for a master’s degree by merging a bachelor’s degree and master’s degree into one 5-year program.

An emerging and available model is to merge a BA and a master’s level program such as a MBA or M.Div. into one five-year integrated curriculum.

It saves time and money for those who are sure of their career direction.
Benefits of dual BA-MA 5-year programs may include:

- better sequencing of courses
- partnerships with other institutions
- use of available online courses

Administrative systems would not need to be duplicated.

It could be a good distinctive unless hundreds of institutions adopt this model.
Merger
Prevent a down-hill slide for your institution by planning ahead and merging with a nearby or larger Christian campus.

This model has some history, and mergers have proven to be difficult.

Some campuses are near one another and should consider merging for a better future for both.
Other campuses owned by the same denomination could merge while treating the smaller or weaker campus as a satellite of the larger or stronger one.

Every day we read about businesses that read the signs of change and merge while there still are win-win options.

Campuses tend to wait too long for this option, bringing to the table a negative balance sheet and a run-down physical plant. This is an area in need of further study.

Perhaps philanthropic organizations could be helpful in convening and funding a careful process where several institutions could discreetly explore this option.
Respond to Cities
Respond to Cities

Develop local faith-based learning by bringing out-of-town Christian education into smaller cities wanting the reputation and economic advantage of a local campus.

Smaller cities seem to have concluded that “no real city” is without a college or two.

Mostly, they see a college as helping attract jobs and their economic development offices take the lead.
In the Phoenix, Arizona area, Mesa has attracted a couple small non-Arizona non-profits to start offering programs.

In addition to Mesa, Arizona, Peoria has exclusives with two small out-of-state colleges to develop a plan for bringing in a local higher education campus.

The cities often offer space, land, or other incentives to encourage campuses to come to their city.
Deep Collaboration
Deep Collaboration

Share services and tools with nearby Christian campuses while still retaining your distinctness that draws tuition-paying students.

Retain all the services and programs that differentiate your institution from others AND that compel tuition-paying students to attend.

Then join with other institutions to massively aggregate all other services and programs.
Go beyond tactical savings of transactional purchases to transform the way your institution does its work. Examples include:

- shared attorney services
- training
- peer audits and reviews that replace expensive external reviews
- shared IT services including shared data centers and staff
- shared faculty members for necessary or attractive courses/majors for which there are insufficient students
- centralized accounting and services
- centralized paperwork handling using image and workflow management tools.

But do hang on to those things that make your campus unique.

For a successful model already growing, see www.thecoalition.us.
Dream Degree

Provide low-cost college education for adults who have already earned most of their credits by participating in a service that creates a degree completion plan.

This idea became public in May of 2013 as a new non-profit led by Christians experienced in this model.

There are webinars online to acquaint potential partner campuses with it.
Basically, this initiative will offer freshman and sophomore general education/elective courses online that are approved for credit by the American Council on Education.

The Dream Degree provider will help mostly adult learners with a scattering of courses (minimum 45 credits) enroll in six-week, instructor-guided courses for $250 (per 3 semester credits).

The Dream Degree website will link the learners to the Christian (and other) participating campuses so they can determine which of the ACE-recommended courses they will accept as transfer credits toward a baccalaureate degree.

The vision is to provide low-cost college education to learners and widen the market for Christian colleges of students with a plan for degree completion.
What Should We Do Now?
What should we do now?

Well, there you have it, all 20 ideas. Whew!

But now what?

First, remember what’s important.

Most important is for each Christian campus to stay confident in the Lord’s provision and leading. There is a spiritual discipline each of us must understand to discern God’s will.
Second, honor your mission.

In thinking about new ideas, each campus needs to honor its mission and understand its culture.

Culture can easily trump certain new ideas, but your mission should not be compromised.

Third, check your reality.

The reality of your future.

The future of traditional 4-year higher education may require changes such as:

- significant layoffs
- larger class sizes
- less fancy buildings
- less borrowing
- dropping tenure
- freezing tuition
- and other difficult adjustments

Not much enthusiasm there!

We can’t plan based on the good old days of yesteryear or what we hope can happen.

Higher education is facing a tsunami of change and each campus must be honest with its particular situation.
The reality of your competition.

There are 1600 private, 4-year, residential campuses. In addition to those, there are hundreds of Bible colleges and hundreds of seminaries from which students can choose as well.

And for outsiders, they all look very much the same.

All look expensive without enough distinguishing features to help students make wise choices.

Fourth, encourage discussion.

Making changes to embrace one of the 20 Ideas cannot be top down surprises.

In a day when everyone demands transparency and accountability, there needs to be process strategies that allow everyone on campus to learn, discuss, and provide feedback.

It is time for boards, faculties, and administrators to listen to one another while seeking God’s best for the institution.
Here at 20ideas.org, we want to create safe places for leaders to dream and dialogue before it is too late to make good changes in Christian higher education.

To help you get started, here are basic ways you can begin thinking about new ideas:

1. **Participate on 20Ideas.org**

20ideas.org is a fun place to get started brainstorming. Rate ideas and share them with your faculty.
If you have questions or comments about a specific idea, comment directly on that idea’s webpage.

Join the discussion forum to see what others have to say about the 20 ideas. Here you can share feedback on the use of this discussion paper on your campus to help each other understand the status of campus dialogue on future options.

2. Get faculty involved.

Share 20ideas.org with your faculty so they can rate ideas and begin brainstorming.

Plan meaningful discussion times with faculty. For example, bring your 20 Ideas ratings and compare, discussing the most popular ideas.

When considering changes, keep in mind that most faculty will say, “Since we were not consulted, don’t count on us to support change.”

Time is short. We need to learn more about change management. Bringing faculty into the discussion early may help dissipate this aversion to change.
3. Network with entrepreneurs.

Some of the new ideas we are brainstorming about today may need entrepreneurs not affiliated with an existing campus.

These risk-taking founders would reflect Clayton Christensen’s “disruptive innovators” theory. But we hope many talented people on existing campuses could also be attracted to these new ventures.

Maybe new kinds of partnerships will emerge between an existing campus and a new venture.

4. Think about distinctives.

As you begin incorporating new ideas, think about your distinctives.

Each campus needs one or more distinctives. Distinctives draw students in, and keep them excited about your particular “brand” of education.

For example, your distinctives could be a variation of the following:

► a curriculum designed around servant leadership
- Idea 20: Getting Started -

► one or more centers of excellence
► a highly “student-focused” environment
  that people talk about
► some other learning strategy

In any case, each campus needs something to help it stand out.

Conclusion

This is a very exciting time to be engaged in the ministry of education and training through a Christian worldview. Let’s make the most of it.

Now, go brainstorm and have fun!