

ABHE 76th ANNUAL MEETING

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Safeguarding Your Institution Against Mission Drift

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The Board's Most Critical Responsibility

The Preservation & Strengthening of the Institution's Founding Purposes, Mission, and Core Values.



Resource

***The Soul of the American University: From
Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief***

Dr. George Marsden



Harvard College's Original Mission Statement

“To be plainly instructed and consider well that the main end of your life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ.”



Resource

The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches

Rev. James Burtchaell



Mission Drift

"The failures of the past, so clearly patterned, so foolishly ignored, and so lethally repeated, emerge pretty clearly from these stories. Anyone who requires further imagination to recognize and remedy them is not up to the task of trying again, and better."

James Burtchaell



The Inevitability of Mission Drift

“...without careful attention, faith-based organizations will inevitably drift from their founding Mission.”

Peter Greer, author *Mission Drift*



Mainline Protestant Church's Position on Abortion: Example of Mission Drift

- ▶ **Convention 1869** - This assembly regards the destruction by parents of their own offspring before birth with abhorrence, as a crime against God and against nature.
- ▶ **General Assembly 1959** - The fetus is a human life to be protected by the criminal law from the moment when the ovum is fertilized....As Christians, we believe that this should not be an individual decision on the part of the physician and couple. Their decision should be limited and restrained by the larger society.



Mainline Protestant Church's Position on Abortion: Example of Mission Drift

- ▶ **General Assembly 1970** - The artificial or induced termination of pregnancy is a matter of careful ethical decision of the patient, her physician, and her pastor or other counselor.
- ▶ **Covenant and Creation 1983** - The decision to terminate a pregnancy may be an affirmation of one's covenant responsibility to accept the limits of human resources....Abortion can therefore be considered a responsible choice within a Christian ethical framework when serious genetic problems arise or when the resources are not adequate to care appropriately for a child.



Mission Drift

**IS YOUR INSTITUTION IN DANGER OF
MISSION DRIFT?**



Warning Signs of Potential or Impending Institutional Drift

- ▶ When the institution hires ANY employee who is not in TOTAL alignment with, and support of your mission, founding purposes, and core values.
 - ▶ Calling
 - ▶ Character
 - ▶ Competence
 - ▶ Commitment
 - ▶ Chemistry



Warning Signs of Potential or Impending Institutional Drift

- ▶ **When total alignment with your mission, founding purposes and core values is not a non-negotiable in recruiting trustees or for hiring any personnel.**
- ▶ **When every employee and trustee does not receive orientation to the institution which underscores the institution's history, founding purpose(s), core values and mission.**



Warning Signs of Potential or Impending Institutional Drift

- ▶ **When the institution fails to hold annual sessions for all employees & trustees in which the institution's history, founding purpose(s), core values and mission are re-enforced.**
- ▶ **When students are not taught the institution's mission, founding purposes & core values & the institution's history.**



Warning Signs of Potential or Impending Institutional Drift

- ▶ **When donors are allowed to influence or tweak the institution's mission, founding purposes or core values by conditions placed on their gifts.**
- ▶ **When biblical principles are allowed to be marginalized by culture.**
- ▶ **When the institution accommodates to culture and the tensions between a Christ-centered institution and the culture begin to decrease**



Warning Signs of Potential or Impending Institutional Drift

- ▶ **When chapel services for students are no longer compulsory.**
- ▶ **When the words of the Mission story start to feel embarrassing or even uncomfortable.**
- ▶ **When the mission statement is no longer the lens or filter through which the board makes its decisions.**



Warning Signs of Potential or Impending Institutional Drift

- ▶ **When the Board Chair, President and Board no longer insist upon systematic and comprehensive training & emphasis on institutional mission, founding purposes and core values...**



Mission Drift

**WHY ALL THIS CONCERN FOR PRESERVING &
STRENGTHENING THE MISSION?**



Mission Drift

**ACTIONS FOR PRESERVING &
STRENGTHENING THE INSTITUTION'S
FOUNDING PURPOSES, MISSION, & CORE
VALUES.**



Actions

The Selection of Trustees Who Fully Understand & Embrace the Institution's Founding Purposes, Mission & Core Values



Actions

“The responsibility for shaping and then maintaining the integrity and accomplishment of the mission falls to the trustees who are held legally accountable to use the college’s assets for the public good, and to the president they hire to manage the institution.

(Association of Governing Boards of Universities & Colleges)



Actions

“When a ministry encounters failure—or even worse, scandal—its difficulties can almost always be traced to a breakdown in governance.”

(Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability)



Actions

“The importance of an active, informed governing body cannot be overemphasized. Left unchecked, even minor board neglect can eventually intrude upon the accountability and effectiveness of the ministry.”

W. B. Adrian, Jr.



Actions

For Your Consideration: Does Every board mtg agenda have a time for mission focus...reinforcing the mission, or concluding the mtg by asking did we take any action or make any decision that detracted from our mission and/or what actions or decisions did we make that strengthened and helped to preserve our mission?



Leadership

THE SELECTION OF LEADERS WHO FULLY UNDERSTAND & EMBRACE THE INSTITUTION'S FOUNDING PURPOSES, MISSION & CORE VALUES

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Leadership

Leadership is at the core of preserving & strengthening the mission.

“Everything rises & falls on leadership.”

John Maxwell



Leadership

“Boards will shape and maintain the college’s Christ-centered mission chiefly through hiring senior leadership who are actively committed to the ideal of a Christian university.”

Dr. David Dockery



Leadership

“One of the top 10 challenges facing Christian higher education today is the need to replace retiring leadership with new leaders who continue to embrace ‘the historic and holistic’ mission of Christ-centered education.”

Dr. Paul Corts



Leadership

Since Christ-centered institutions of higher education tend to be small compared to most universities, presidents of these institutions can have a much stronger influence, sometimes almost single handedly, on the college's direction

W. B. Adrian, Jr.



Leadership

THE CRITICAL ROLE OF THE CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER TO PRESERVING THE MISSION



Mission Drift

For Your Consideration: One of the deepest challenges any Christ-centered institution board faces: how to ensure that your institution stays true to its mission, especially when that mission becomes countercultural. What concrete steps does your board constantly take to monitor mission drift?



Leadership

**THE HIRING OF FACULTY AND STAFF:
A CRITICAL DIMENSION OF PRESERVING THE MISSION**

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Leadership

For Your Consideration: Faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees must understand from the beginning of their service that the college is something to which they come to participate, but it does not belong to them. If there ever comes a time that the stated mission of the institution no longer matches their own personal mission, they must not try to change the mission, but leave the college in wholeness for those who will follow them.



Mission Drift

Communicating the Founding Purposes, Mission & Core Values Through Excellence, Clarity & Messaging



Mission Drift

EXCELLENCE: Mission focused institutions understand that faith compels excellence in the quality and effectiveness of programs and operations.



Mission Drift

“HOLY SHODDY IS STILL SHODDY”

Dr. Elton Trueblood



Mission Drift

CLARITY: Staying on mission begins with defining it, documenting it, and sharing it regularly with staff and leadership.



Mission Drift

MESSAGING: Mission True institutions boldly declare their Christ-centered identity.

- a) It is imperative that the institution commit to boldly declaring its Christ-centered Mission, and**
- b) integrate the mission and scripture into your messaging, so that your identity is unmistakably clear**

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Mission Drift

For Your Consideration: Follow the Money.

Are there some gifts the institution should not accept?



Mission Drift

CONCLUDING CAVEATS



Mission Drift

“There will come a point at which you can no longer move the line.”

Dr. Carl Lundquist



Mission Drift

“Who are we at Indiana Wesleyan to believe that it can’t happen to us?”

Dr. Bud Bence



Mission Drift

“Tell me not about the things that have changed; rather, tell me about the things that have not changed.”

Dr. Charles DeVol



Mission Drift

ACCOUNTABILITY: THE SACRED TRUST



Mission Drift

Will those who come behind you find you faithful?