

themselves through their mission statements and the creation of stated core values. These attributes serve to articulate the institution's expectations of faculty, staff, and students. It is through this process, and the subsequent engagement of its constituents, that an institution's *normative culture* develops.

Unfortunately, very little research has been conducted on the congruence that exists between an institution's shared identity as expressed by its *normative culture* and its defined purpose over time. Equally important in the case of institutions with religious auspices like LLU, is the added impact that the integration of faith into an operationalized philosophy of education has on the sustainability of these institutions over time. It

experiences of American Christian universities found that American universities with strong religious influences expressed a greater desire to continue to integrate faith in their curricula and campus lifestyle. This was stressed through the practice of requiring students to take theology classes, attend communal worship services, and make a firm commitment to adhere to their philosophical doctrines (Glanzer, 2008). According to Glanzer (2008), these elements tend to give Christian-based universities their identity which leads to the establishment of their *normative culture*.

Slippage or secularization, which has affected even the most traditional religious higher education institutions over time, is a complex phenomenon and rarely a uniform process (Davie, 2002). In some instances, slippage, or secularization, is accidental; in other cases, it is somewhat deliberate. Burtchaelle (1998) suggests a repeating pattern that may occur in no particular order but usually involves compulsory worship becoming voluntary; a less restrictive/directive code of student behavior (e.g., dress); non-clerical appointments in leadership; reductions in numbers of students, staff, and faculty from the institution's denominational background; and a movement toward academic theology, or religion as a social phenomenon. In the hope of avoiding this type of movement away from our Seventh-day Adventist Christian roots, the constituents of LLU implemented the following study to better understand its *normative culture*.

Methods. Using qualitative data collection methods, 29 structured focus group discussions were conducted between October 2007 and January 2008 (5 University leadership, 14 faculty, 5 staff, and 4 student focus groups). In total, more than 300 individuals participated. A systematic sampling approach was used to assure triangulation of opinions. To this end, current LLU leadership, students, faculty, and staff participated in the study. Attendance was invited, but not required by Participants were not recruited on the basis of their religious affiliation, however participants did self identify during focus group discussions. To optimize attendance, faculty, staff, and student focus groups were held in school pairings matched by location (access/proximity), occurring generally during the lunch hour with food provided for the participants. The leadership focus groups were conducted as part of an annual administrative retreat.

Before discussions began each group was given a written definition of *normative culture* that had been developed by the Educational Effectiveness Committee (EEC) Research Subcommittee. This definition was then outlined by the facilitators to insure that participants understood the concept. As such, *normative culture* was loosely defined for the context of this study as:

It (normative culture) is based on (often informal) consensus, agreement, and similarities of values; pertinent elements include common objectives, standards/rules/norms (implicit and explicit), and behavior. It is often maintained by self-exclusion, sanctions (informal and formal), visible markers (e.g., Good Samaritan Statue, pledge, core values), reinforcement of common themes/slogans at meetings, (i.e., seven core values, pledge, Motto of "To Make Man Whole"), recruitment of Seventms (impTJ.0. TD.0023 Tc{MTwfnat1 0 TD.0014 Tc(.)T

- *Normative culture* and service as Identity
- *Normative culture* and Wholeness
- Future trajectory for LLU/Interventions
- *Normative culture* and its role for LLU as a university with religious auspices
- Communication/isolation as challenges to a shared *normative culture*

Summary of findings. Participants across all groups were enthusiastically loyal to LLU and were excited about taking part in discussions about the institution's *normative culture*. Individuals were happy to share their views and voiced a desire for more such opportunities. Group responses were mostly positive to the questions, with few overtly negative responses. In many cases, facilitators had to probe participants about the existence of negatives in LLU's

Students universally noted that while *wholeness* is a crucial part of LLU's

culture, including Seventh-day Adventist doctrine so that more of a deliberate exposure could take place. Similarly, staff focus group respondents believed strongly that the University should make more of a concerted effort to increase knowledge about the Adventist culture on campus since they perceive LLU's *normative culture* to be based on Seventh-day Adventist religious principles. They feared that too many people on campus are unaware of these principles, and should have the opportunity to learn about Adventism to better understand our *normative culture*, regardless of their own individual religious affiliation. Many noted that we should not be "apologetic" for who we are and that those who join the Loma Linda University community, be they faculty, staff, or student, should be welcomed warmly and given ample opportunity to recognize and appreciate who we are and what this institution stands for. In a similar vein, several staff members noted that many students not from Adventist backgrounds might have found it difficult to "fit in" around campus without such an orientation. Staff were concerned that students coming into the University were not properly educated about Adventism or given the necessary support to become acclimated to our institution and our beliefs. Therefore, many felt that education about Adventism should be provided, not to evangelize but to create a shared understanding that would allow everyone to be more at ease and thus able to engage in open discussion. Students expressed these concerns, stating that other students ostracized them if they did not engage in what is considered appropriate behavior by the Adventist community. On the other hand, it was noted that many non-Christian students view LLU as a safe, respectful place in which to live, work, and study.

A recurring theme that was thought to threaten the cohesion of LLU's *normative culture* is the lack of cross-school interactions and the perceived isolation of students within their schools or even within their respective programs. Many students noted that only when they made extraordinary efforts to develop relationships outside of their schools did they have contact with, or even recognize students from other schools or learn what other schools had to offer. It was felt that this structure of isolation could inadvertently help undermine LLU's religious roots unless it is carefully monitored. The recent move toward a unification of previously isolated schools is seen by many as a step in the right direction. Under the leadership of former president Dr. Behrens, and now Drs. Hart and Carter, LLU is centrally focusing on its core values (e.g., through a more deliberate

Campus Worship curriculum and requiring all degree and University certificate programs to include a religion/ethics cognate). Although this direction is coming from top leadership, many faculty, staff, and students are welcoming and recognizing these efforts as initial steps that should be taken further. For students, but also to a slightly lesser degree for staff and faculty, the desire for more opportunities to engage across schools is an important issue. Many students have a strong desire both to socialize and to share academic and service experiences with students from different schools. They question why there are not more cross-listed core classes that support interdisciplinary engagement.

Final Reflections: Almost unanimously, faculty, students, staff and those in leadership voiced their

perceived as one more indicator of slide toward the slippery slope of secularism—one more step away from the institution’s foundational commitment.

Our *normative culture* research indicates that the notion of pluralism, as practiced at LLU, may require the development of a fifth category, unique to LLU, to be added to the four identified by Benne (2001). Further research on this topic will be conducted in the coming years. What we value and identify within the category of intentional pluralism is the focus that goes beyond mere diversity for the sake of tolerance, but truly engages diversity for the purpose of understanding and learning.

We must learn to engage and embrace others, their philosophies, culture, and the various ways of viewing challenges. We do this to eliminate ignorance, half-truths, and stereotypes. Being intentionally pluralistic in the modern sense does not require LLU to abandon its standards, beliefs, and history in order to be accommodating to diverse points of view. Instead, such a stance insures that we will openly encounter others, value them as individuals, and reflect upon their ideas in keeping with the example of Jesus Christ who loved all the world unconditionally while remaining steadfast to his principles of integrity, belief, and selfless service.

Theme 2: Bible-based Faith. The second research theme identified during the development of the Institutional Proposal emphasized attention to studying the 17 student learning outcomes (SLOs) developed in 1998. It was felt that this type of study would assist in reaching consensus of meaning and aid in resolving the measurement challenges associated with original SLOs. As such, an exercise was conducted in the Fall of 2005 during the Faculty Colloquium for the purpose of prioritizing which of the SLOs would be the focus of this initial inquiry.⁴¹

3. Do you think the term “Christ-centered” is an accurate substitute for the term *Bible-based faith*?
4. Are there terms other than “Christ-centered” that you prefer?

All the groups were enthusiastic about their participation in the redesign of a SLO considered to be essential in reflecting the educational philosophy and purposes of LLU. Twenty-four focus groups were held which involved over 300 participants from across campus.

Results: Ultimately, the majority of participants felt that the symbolism of the message needed to convey an idea that supported the University’s emphasis on *wholeness*, of “service to mankind in Christ,” and “to do as Christ did.” These sentiments were strongly reflected in the participants’ explanations of how they strive to demonstrate a *Bible-based faith* in their everyday interactions with students. Many noted that this is accomplished by openly sharing about faith and personal responsibility, including short reflections and/or devotions before class, and notably in numerous one-to-one