

# Slicing Through the Curriculum: Integrating Christian Faith into a New College

**Michael Pregitzer**

Regent University

**Jason D. Baker**

Regent University

**Josh McMullen**

Regent University

## Abstract

If one could start a new Christian college, what would faith integration look like? Without decades or centuries of institutional history, how would the faculty craft a distinctly Christian curriculum from scratch? What steps should be taken to evaluate the depth of such integration and promote accountability to the institutional mission? While such questions can serve as effective prompts to promote faculty discussion about curricular improvements, they were part of the lived experience during the past two decades as Regent University created its College of Arts & Sciences (CAS) to bring undergraduate education to an institution that had been exclusively graduate focused. This paper offers a description of the process that CAS used, including its challenges, with an emphasis on the process used to integrate faith throughout the curriculum. The authors' intent is to provide a useful model for other Christian institutions wishing to pursue a similar integrative approach for forming or reforming an academic endeavor.

**Key words:** faith integration; Christian college; university administration; curriculum development; quality assurance

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Regent University was founded in 1978 as CBN University, a freestanding Christian graduate institution offering master's and, subsequently, doctoral degrees in professional fields such as communication, journalism, education, law, psychology, government, and business. The university offered programs on campus — and later via distance and online learning — but remained exclusively graduate until 2000 when it began a degree completion program for students with associate degrees or equivalent. This effort typically borrowed faculty from schools across the university and remained relatively small. This changed in 2005 when Regent University received approval to offer four-year college degrees and establish a new School of Undergraduate Studies. The response was immediate, with the inaugural enrollment in fall 2005 exceeding 1,600 students, up six-fold from the 267-degree completion students enrolled in the previous fall semester (Baker, 2005).

Upon launch, this new initiative became the largest school at the university. While leveraging faculty, content, and pedagogies from across the institution was a fast and frugal

approach, the result was an unintentionally eclectic educational environment for students and faculty. In many ways, it reflected its degree completion program origins (albeit across a four-year curriculum) rather than showcasing a traditional undergraduate experience. As the school expanded its reach to include full undergraduate academic programs, including new-to-Regent programs in the humanities, science, technology, and other disciplines, dedicated undergraduate faculty and staff were hired. By 2010, undergraduate enrollment had increased to over 2,800 students and it became evident that the School of Undergraduate Studies needed to establish its own identity within the university.

Over the subsequent years, the School of Undergraduate Studies developed a distinct vision, mission, and identity focused around a thoroughly Christian approach to undergraduate education. Furthermore, it actively and intentionally integrated those elements into all aspects of the curriculum and the students' academic lives, guided by a commitment to foster an atmosphere of Christian

academic excellence with a large and continually growing enrollment of Christian as well as non-Christian students. To commemorate the fulfillment of this process and further establish its new identity, the school was given a new name in 2012: the College of Arts & Sciences (CAS).

One of the hallmarks of CAS originated from a goal set by leadership for faculty and staff during this formative period: wherever the curriculum is “sliced,” there must be a clear application of faith to the discipline. This goal inspired an integration project that was approached in phases and took several years to complete. The project remains in effect today and the curriculum is revisited, re-examined, and revised on a regular basis to ensure that the college remains faithful to this goal.

This paper offers a description of the process that CAS employed, including its challenges, with an emphasis on the method used to integrate faith throughout the curriculum.<sup>1</sup> After a brief introduction to the conceptual foundation that guided the project, the paper’s structure approximates the approach taken to the integration project itself. First, the paper outlines the process for establishing a foundational vision and mission for the college, followed by the creation of the CAS identity, which established the principles to guide faculty and staff in all college-related activities. Third, the paper describes the process for identifying and adapting an academically-sound faith integration model for CAS aligned with the college mission. Fourth, the paper explains the four-phase implementation plan designed to embed the pedagogical principles within all discipline-specific curricula, and, finally, outlines the “revisit-review-revise” strategy to maintain curricula integrity moving forward. The authors’ intent is to provide a useful model for other Christian institutions wishing to pursue a similar integrative approach for forming or reforming an academic endeavor.

### Conceptual Foundation

For a Christian institution, faith-learning integration is the application of faith (and the ideals associated with it) to the curriculum; as such, integration can be considered as “a scholarly project whose goal is to ascertain and to develop integral relationships which exist between the Christian faith and human knowledge, particularly as expressed in the various academic disciplines” (Hasker, 1992, p. 234). Unlike many Christian colleges, Regent University is not affiliated with a specific denomination, church, or theological framework. The institution has a Statement of Faith which all faculty and staff must affirm, and under which all students must submit to be taught (regardless of personal affirmation). Accordingly, it was essential that the curriculum serve as the nexus of the institution’s values, identity, and purposes, and that of the students’ and their

learning (Glanzer, 2008; Glanzer & Ream, 2009; Hasker, 1992). For the school’s mission, identity, and faith commitment to truly matter, these elements had to be obvious in every academic discipline, program, and course.

CAS leadership turned to the faith-integration model outlined by Hasker (1992) in his article, “Faith-learning Integration: An Overview.” Hasker defines faith-learning integration “as a scholarly project whose goal is to ascertain and to develop integral relationships which exist between the Christian faith and human knowledge, particularly as expressed in the various academic disciplines” (p. 234). Hasker emphasizes that relationships between faith and knowledge and the content of the faith and the subject-matter “inherently exist,” but do “need to be ascertained and developed” to avoid the appearance that faith and knowledge are “alien and unrelated to each other” (p. 235). Finally, and what was very important to CAS’s pursuit of faith-learning integration, was Hasker’s (1992) commitment to specific, discipline-related integration:

Finally, faith-learning integration is especially concerned with the disciplines into which our knowledge is organized; the same concerns or subject-matter and methodology which lead to the distinction of disciplines also dictate that, initially at least, faith-learning integration is best pursued at the level of particular academic discipline. (p. 235)

Hasker’s approach would help CAS create a faith-integration model that would “slice-through” all programs, disciplines, and courses.

### Establishing the Vision, Mission, and Identity

The first step was for CAS to define the vision, mission, and identity that would guide the faculty and staff in all its endeavors. Moreover, they had to align with the Regent University vision and mission, which should guide all institutional activities and thinking (Collins, 2001; Glanzer & Ream, 2009). As an institution within the greater university, CAS was committed to supporting the university’s aspirations in ways that uniquely leveraged the strengths and unique offerings of the college. With this goal in mind, CAS faculty and staff collaboratively began developing a “mission and identity” document. The mission outlined CAS’s purpose while the identity statement outlined the ideals that would guide the CAS community in living out the mission.

CAS adopted the University motto as its vision: the school would serve to cultivate *Christian leadership to change the world*. CAS’s mission statement was drafted by CAS leadership and then submitted to department chairs and

faculty for review and feedback. Throughout this project, the development process followed this distributive “leadership-driven” approach: draft documents and procedures were initiated by the Dean’s Office and then funneled through department chairs to faculty; faculty feedback was fed through chairs and then to the Dean’s Office for review and approval. This was often an iterative process with multiple reviews and feedback loops. This “leadership-driven” approach was employed for two reasons: (1) it aligned with Regent’s organizational structure and culture, and (2) it was more efficient and expedited the project. This was evidenced when, after only two months, the following mission statement along with a 12-page foundation document explaining the background and justification for it was unanimously approved and affirmed by the faculty, staff, and student leadership of CAS in November 2010: *The mission of the College of Arts & Sciences is to graduate exceptional students deeply committed to Christ’s calling to cherish character, challenge culture, and serve the world.*

In addition to providing a framework for all activities in CAS, the mission was to serve as the foundation of CAS’s faith integration project. Rangan (2004) observed that “[m]ost nonprofits have broad, inspiring mission statements—and they should. But they also need a systematic method that connects their callings to their programs” (p. 212). To connect this new CAS mission to practice, the various elements of the mission had to first be clearly defined. This was done via the foundation document in which each of the aspects were defined and supported from a Biblical perspective. Fundamentally, such an approach served to ground the mission statement and its subsequent application within the context of Scripture. Secondly, it provided an exemplar for faculty and students of faith integration as applied to the organization itself.

The following section provides excerpts from this foundation document along with framing commentary to highlight the process and product associated with defining the CAS mission and grounding it within a Biblical perspective.

### **Called to Cherish Character**

Acknowledging the university’s motto, Christian leadership to change the world, CAS faculty and staff all agreed that the character of a leader matters and, as such, the school would commit to addressing character formation. Consequently, for *cherish character*, CAS focused on the image of Christ and that by helping students develop that image they can become more like the One with perfect character:

Even in a fallen state, human beings are still in God’s image (Gen. 1:27; Gen. 9:6; James 3:9)<sup>2</sup> and

while moral purity has been lost and the intellect has been corrupted, God has graciously provided a path to progressively restoring God’s image in his people through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ (Col. 3:10). Character becomes more and more refined as believers are “conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom. 8:29) fulfilling the promise that “when he appears we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2). Moral and spiritual character is “being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor. 3:18). (Regent University, 2010, p. 4)

With the aspiration for good character outlined, CAS provided insights into the ways good character can be lived out in life, specifically, in terms of knowledge, wisdom and understanding:

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, knowledge, wisdom, and understanding (Ex. 4:6; Col. 1:9-10) are praiseworthy character traits among godly men and women. The book of Proverbs begins with an exhortation “to know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight” (1:2), to “let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance” (1:5), and to understand that the “fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (1:7)....The theme of godly wisdom continues into the New Testament as the Apostle Paul distinguishes between the “wisdom of the world” and the “wisdom of God.” (1 Cor. 1:20-24; 1 Cor. 2:7)....This is the wisdom that CAS will foster in its students. (Regent University, 2010, p. 5)

Character is often viewed through the lens of integrity, but CAS deemed it important to communicate that character also needs to be understood as a divine gift with human obligations:

A godly character should be cherished as a wonderful gift from God. The Greek word for “cherish” is *thalpo*, which means to “foster with tender care” (see Eph. 5:29). As a person is to nourish and cherish his or her own body, he or she should nurture, sustain, and care for godly character (Prov. 4:23; Rom. 5:1-5; 1 Tim. 6:11-16; 2 Tim. 2:14-16). The Apostle Paul encourages his readers to live a life of obedience to God and integrity (Phil. 4:8-9). This is a character to be cherished. (Regent University, 2010, p. 5)

### **Called to Challenge Culture**

How would CAS instruct students in the ways to engage the culture? Was CAS to take a “culture war” approach, borrow from Niebuhr (1951), or pursue a different direction? In the end, CAS borrowed elements from various approaches, but, ultimately, anchored its approach on 2 Tim. 3:16, in which a Christian leader must evaluate all viewpoints and ideas through the lens of Scripture, and be willing and able to challenge the non-Biblical presuppositions, assumptions, and truth claims of the culture in which he or she lives. Without disengaging from the culture, the students must join in God’s redemptive purposes for the culture in science, the arts, literature, history, politics, economics, commerce, education, law, and theology by gaining a deep understanding of these subjects and institutions (Regent University, 2010, p. 6).

CAS provided a biblical example of this commitment through Daniel and how he navigated a faithful life in a foreign land by understanding and excelling in that culture (Dan. 6:3) while standing firm against ungodliness (Dan. 6:10-11), and blessing that culture (Dan. 6:16-28). Finally, it is also important to note that the various components of the mission are not isolated from one another. For example, in challenge culture, students are warned to guard their character:

Finally, in challenging culture, the Christian leader must be mindful of the temptations of the world, deeply reflecting on the desires of his or her heart (Luke 6:43-45), committed to removing idols which compete for worship that is rightfully God’s (Ezek. 14:6), and quick to confess and repent of sin and be restored to a right relationship with Christ (1 John 1:9). (Regent University, 2010, p. 7)

### Called to Serve the World

The third component of the mission is, serve the world. Again, this component is not separate from cherish character and challenge culture, as service is an act of character, and movement into the world means engaging culture. The Christian leader is called to a life of Biblical service (Matt. 20:26-28). Just as Christ in his humility served and transformed the world (Phil. 2:1-11), believers are to “shine as lights in the world” (v. 15) and redeem it for Christ. Christians serve the world as ambassadors of Him (2 Cor. 5:20), reconciling the world to Him, acting redemptively to call people out of sin, and proclaiming the hope of transformation through Him. Moreover, students need to serve the world by actively fostering redemptive change, as faith is made complete by works (James 2:22). Change comes through Spirit-led service that builds businesses, helps the poor, feeds the hungry, ministers to the lost, disciples believers, governs citizens, educates children, manages homes, and faithfully serves the Kingdom. Paul,

Timothy, Peter, James, Matthew, Luke, Moses, Esther, Ruth, Joseph, Daniel, David, and Abraham are just a few of Biblical figures who acted in faith and obedience to change history – to change the world (Regent University, 2010, p. 7).

With the guiding mission defined, CAS turned to developing an identity for the college, that is, the principles by which faculty and staff would execute that mission.

### Developing an Identity

While the mission statement focuses on what CAS seeks to accomplish with students, the identity statement focuses on the key values that faculty and staff would leverage to accomplish those goals. The CAS dean believed that it was critical to develop a unique identity for the fledgling organization: faculty and staff members needed to understand the values that define CAS. As with the mission statement development, the values were initially developed and proposed to the faculty and staff by CAS leadership, in consultation with department chairs during weekly “chairs council” meetings led by the CAS dean. Faculty and staff provided feedback and changes were made as part of the iterative process of creating the identity statement for the college. After a couple months, a draft version of the identity statement was approved by faculty and staff in November 2010, with continued refinements occurring until final adoption in May 2011. That statement is as follows: “The College of Arts & Sciences is a Christ-centered, Biblically-grounded academic community shaped by and dedicated to the ideals of transformation, holism, and inheritance” (Regent University, 2010, p. 8). In brief, the college is committed to transforming students’ lives through a holistic orientation (body, mind, spirit), building with deep gratitude on the blessings from God and those who have otherwise contributed to the institution.

Concepts like transformation, holistic, and inheritance can be nuanced, even within Christian communities. Furthermore, organizational leaders and faculty change over time, so providing foundational commentary helps ensure that future community members understand the intention behind the words. Therefore, as with the mission statement, it was important to unpack the components within the identity statement. By transformation, CAS focused on changed lives and provided a biblical basis for its importance and how this transformation will impact all areas of life:

Believers are continuously transformed by the renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23). The word for “transformed” (Rom. 12:2) in the Greek is *metamorphoo*, which is the same word for “transfigured” used in Mark 9:2 to describe the revelation of Christ’s deity; literally, the word

means “change in form.” CAS is committed to nurturing this radical change in students as new creations in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17; 2 Cor. 3:18). This transformation results in a worldview that will help the student see reality the way God says he or she should see it. This is a worldview that will redefine science, the arts, literature, history, politics, economics, commerce, education, family, law, theology, and philosophy for our students.... This worldview will change relationships, families, households, companies, schools, governments, and nations. The students’ transformation will, in effect, transform the world. (Regent University, 2010, p. 8)

By holistic life, CAS encourages development of the full human being including the mind, body, spirit, and vocation as well as academics. CAS encourages the mind and spirit connection, a flourishing of intellect and faith that begins with Christ’s command to his people to love the Lord with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their mind (Matthew 22:37):

This reflects the totality of the human being: there is nothing that should be reserved for the self in our relationship with the Lord. Our commitment to the knowledge and love of the Lord must be total....As transformation comes through the renewal of the mind (Rom. 12:2), students will experience a vigorous intellectual environment designed to help them see God as the creator and sustainer of all knowledge and wisdom. (Regent University, 2010, pp. 8 - 9)

As it is through faith alone that believers come to Christ and by faith that believers change and grow in His likeness, the College of Arts & Sciences supports a vibrant faith community through many opportunities for worship through regular chapel and other special events.

Finally, CAS takes a posture of gratitude for all that God has provided and for all of those who have preceded the CAS community in the kingdom. Although CAS was being established as a new educational endeavor, it wanted to acknowledge that it benefits from many treasures which it inherited rather than earned. Among other things, this has the effect of controlling pride and fostering humility within a higher education ecosystem that often promotes the opposite.

This posture is essential to the CAS identity:

Inheritances are gifts from the past to be used in the present to benefit the future....The College of Arts & Sciences stands at the intersection of many inheritances: Regent University, the American founding principles, Christian liberal arts, a life-

sustaining planet, and the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The College of Arts & Sciences is committed to sharing these inheritances with students so they can be blessed and bless generations to come. The College of Arts & Sciences is also a benefactor of the Christian liberal arts heritage.... motivated by discovering God’s truth and serving the world. (Regent University, 2010, p. 9)

The College of Arts & Sciences acknowledges the responsibility to appreciate and manage these inheritances and through study and service teach students the same. Reflection on these inheritances should promote humility and gratitude while also contextualizing the academic experience:

At the College of Arts & Sciences, we have embraced [this] inheritance in order to cultivate literature, speech, writing, math, music and arts, and science within our students. We have inherited the writings, scholarship, traditions, and structure of those that came before us. To study the liberal arts is not only an exercise in knowledge and skill acquisition, but in identity acquisition. The Christian identity is intertwined in the liberal arts. The College of Arts & Sciences acknowledges that we are heirs to this inheritance and boldly offer it to students. (Regent University, 2010, p. 10)

Finally, all members of the Regent community are heirs and recipients of blessings from those who have preceded them in the faith: “CAS honors the sacrifices and contributions of saints that have preceded it, studying their works and their lives, and sharing the history that binds us as Christians and a legacy that will serve as a strong foundation for faith and the faith of students” (Regent University, 2010, p. 10).

In summary, the CAS vision, mission, and identity work together to serve as guideposts for all that CAS seeks to know, do and be, and also serves to establish CAS as an exceptional and unique institution of higher learning. Framed by a mission that focuses on cherishing character, challenging culture, and serving the world, CAS is committed to godly transformation of the whole person approached with a heart of gratitude and humility.

### Designing an Aligned Curriculum

Once the biblical foundations of CAS were established via vision, mission, and identity, the next step in the project was to determine how to incorporate these faith components into the curriculum. Vision, mission, and identity statements are important, but they can only be effective and meaningful if they manifest themselves in the life of the institution. As a new entity, CAS lacked the institutional

history and tradition that often guide faith integration efforts. Rather than being a hinderance, however, this dynamic fostered intentionality. CAS recognized that it had to design faith integration into the curriculum from the start.

The challenge presented to the CAS community by its leadership was clear: No matter where someone slices the curriculum, faith integration must be visible. That is, high level claims had to be supported by discipline-specific, program-specific, and course-specific evidence. If a parent or student, for example, asked, “How is faith integrated in History 102?” CAS was committed to answering that question in a clear, tangible way. In particular, the focus on discipline-specific faith integration was critical.

CAS wanted the mission, in particular, to deeply inform a robust, scholarly faith integration. Since the mission was aligned with biblical principles, integrating the mission alone could serve to integrate faith, but CAS sought to employ an academically-vetted model that dove-tailed with the mission, adding actionable tasks and activities to ensure thoughtful Christian integration into each discipline.

Hasker outlines several dimensions or tasks associated with the faith-learning integration project (Hasker, 1992). CAS started with these dimensions and adapted them for their purposes, adding and adjusting elements that made sense in light of their approach to integration. The process of developing the dimensions was to be a theologically-informed exploration of the discipline in order to identify and evaluate commonalities and tensions between the discipline and faith tradition, gracefully embracing the commonalities and redemptively addressing the latter. This task required the faculty to examine the aspects of the discipline that invite or require Christian interpretation – this is essentially the integrative strategy.

The result was a set of six faith-learning domains, for which each discipline was to develop responses in light of Christian theology (Hasker, 1992):

- 1) **Disciplinary foundations:** the scholar considers the foundational assumptions – methodological, epistemological, and ontological – which are stated or presupposed as the basis of the discipline, and asks whether any of them are particularly significant or problematic from the standpoint of the Christian faith. The main task is to identify the foundational belief, then subject it to scrutiny and determine its relationship to theological foundations.
- 2) **Applied theological foundations:** considers how theological foundations apply to the discipline; in other words, what fundamental insights and

convictions, derivable from Christian theology, are relevant to the discipline?

- 3) **Disciplinary practices:** requires an analysis of the disciplinary practices and requires scholars to investigate the aspects of the discipline that are of particular interest to Christians and determine if the discipline gives adequate attention (e.g., research) to these interests.
- 4) **Disciplinary worldview contributions:** requires investigation of how this discipline enables Christians to understand God, His world, and fellow human beings differently than if the insights of discipline were not available. In other words, how does the discipline help to enhance the overall vision of reality in the light of Christ?
- 5) **Ethics and values:** explores the ethical implications of the disciplinary foundations when put into practice; for example, how might the implementation of a disciplinary theory contradict an aspect of Christian theology? What cautions or methods of discernment need to be developed? What are the values of the discipline and Christianity and where is there common commitment and tension?
- 6) **Contributions to the kingdom of God:** considers the ultimate goal of Christian practice which is to build the kingdom of God. Therefore, consider how the opportunities that are available within the practice of the discipline may serve and contribute to the kingdom of God.

With this model serving as a foundation for faith-integration, CAS also had to make a clear link between these faith integration domains and the college’s mission. As an example, *cherish character* is a foundational element of the college’s mission. Part of cherish character is to understand ethical biblical principles in one’s discipline and act accordingly. This evaluation of ethical principles, critical to the mission, is expressed in Hasker’s ethics and values domain. Therefore, by pursuing this domain per Hasker’s guidance, the college is reinforcing its mission to cherish character, integrating both faith and the mission into the disciplines.

To more readily establish the link between Hasker’s domains and CAS’s mission, ten pedagogical integration principles were derived from the elements of the mission statement, Hasker’s six faith-integration domains, and CAS’s commitment to biblical truth (Regent University, 2011). These principles helped CAS combine vision, mission, identity, and Hasker’s faith-integration domains into the curricula; therefore, the “slicing of the curriculum” would reveal one of these 10 principles:

- 1) Become proficient: Examine the Scriptures, Christian doctrines, and Christian theological concepts (e.g., Imago Dei, Trinity, Incarnation, etc.) and explore their implications for the Christian life, heart, and mind. Understand and master the discipline; identify, explain, and evaluate important events, thinkers, theories, and fields of study.
- 2) Grow in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding: Identify and evaluate underlying disciplinary pre-suppositions and contradictions; identify and evaluate the fundamental insights and convictions of a Christian worldview relevant to the discipline (Hasker domains: disciplinary foundations, applied theological foundations).
- 3) Evaluate ethical principles: Explore the ethical challenges associated with the study of the discipline (Hasker domain: ethics and values).
- 4) Model Christian virtues: Reflect on the importance of Christian virtues within the study of the discipline (Hasker domain: ethics and values).
- 5) Discover differences: Identify and evaluate underlying disciplinary pre-suppositions and contradictions; subject these disciplinary foundations to scrutiny and identify errors in light of Christian worldview foundations and the facts of God's reality (Hasker domains: disciplinary foundations, applied theological foundations).
- 6) Find common ground: Explore how the study of the discipline serves to enhance and contribute to understanding reality in light of Christ (Hasker domain: disciplinary worldview contributions).
- 7) Fill the gaps: Investigate how the discipline is ignoring and/or adequately addressing Christian concerns in the study of the discipline (Hasker domain: disciplinary practices).
- 8) Transform the culture: Explore how the current issues in the culture are being addressed by the discipline and how they need to be addressed from a Christian perspective (Hasker domain: disciplinary practices).
- 9) Reflect a servant's heart: Reflect on the importance of service and a servant's heart to the kingdom within the context of the discipline; model service in academic and other settings (Hasker domain: contributions to the kingdom of God).
- 10) Understand Kingdom service: Equip with applicable skills, knowledge, and character to use in the world to build the kingdom of God (Hasker domain: contributions to the kingdom of God).

These principles would then be integrated into each program, supported by readings, exams, assignments, and other resources and activities. Note that the first principle – *Become Proficient* – recognizes that the truth and trustworthiness of the Scriptures provide the foundation of the mission statement and the Christian faith. As such, the college is committed to educating students to pursue *biblical/theological proficiency* in God's Word, the foundation upon which all the other principles stand. There is also a foundational need to establish disciplinary proficiency. Faith integration requires as a fundamental starting point a deep understanding of one's faith and of the discipline. One must be well-versed in both as a starting point for the integrative process.

The alignment between the CAS mission statement, its 10 faith-learning integration principles, and the six faith-learning domains derived from Hasker is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Relationship of Mission, Principles, and Domains

Mission	Faith-Learning Integration Principles	Aligned Hasker Faith-Learning Domain
Foundations	1. Become Proficient	a. Christian theological foundations for the discipline
		b. Christ-honoring, Biblically-informed canon for the discipline
Cherish Character	2. Grow in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding	disciplinary foundations; applied theological foundations
	3. Evaluate ethical principles	ethic and values
	4. Model Christian virtues	ethics and values
Challenge Culture	5. Discover differences	disciplinary foundations; applied theological foundations
	6. Find common ground	disciplinary worldview contributions
	7. Fill the gaps	disciplinary practices
	8. Transform the culture	disciplinary practices
Serve the World	9. Reflect a servant's heart	contributions to the Kingdom of God
	10. Understand Kingdom service	contributions to the Kingdom of God

Since the first principle – *Become Proficient* – reflects the Biblical foundation upon which the other dimensions rest, commentary is provided in lieu of domain alignment. Table 1 essentially summarizes the section above: the first column identifies the fundamental components of CAS's mission statement; the second column identifies CAS's faith learning principles that explain how each component will be realized; and the third column aligns the mission and faith-learning principles with Hasker's model. As a result of this deliberative process, CAS has developed a mission that integrates with the university's aspirations and is informed by faith commitments, and those faith commitments can be expressed through pedagogical principles informed by faith-learning domains adapted from Hasker (1992).

### Implementing Across Disciplines

The formal process of discipline-specific faith/mission integration into curricula and courses began in May 2011 when each department chair was provided with guidelines, templates, and a project plan by the Dean's Office. As with the prior development efforts, this activity was executed in a systematic manner. Even though the faculty had been active and invested in the development of the mission and integrative framework, faith integration across the curriculum warranted more than a charge to go therefore and implement.

Accordingly, a four-step implementation process was developed by the Dean's Office, with input from key

department chairs who had already demonstrated proficiency in faith-integration. The process required chairs to follow the provided multi-page template and generate a department-level document to include the following: (1) articulation of theological foundations, (2) delineation of an integration philosophy based on the faith-integration domains, (3) compilation of a biblically-informed canon, and (4) application of a Christian worldview to the curriculum through the 10 pedagogical principles. The process was coordinated through the Dean's Office (principally by the Associate Dean of Instruction) and department chairs, with regular meetings held to provide feedback on progress. Each of the steps was completed in phases — with opportunities for peer review, feedback, and refinement — and were rolled out to two departments as a pilot and then, subsequently, to the remaining departments.

### Stepwise Process

The following four-steps were followed by CAS department chairs and faculty to implement the faith-integration framework (Pregitzer, 2012):

1. *Articulation of theological foundations:* This step required each academic department to develop statements related to theological foundations. Departments were given three months to complete this step. While seemingly obvious, faith integration cannot proceed from within a theological vacuum. A robust, orthodox understanding of the Christian faith is the cornerstone of faith integration. Therefore, for this part of the integration project, each department



developed an “articulation of Christian theological foundations” document based upon the seven tenets of the university’s Statement of Faith. For each of the tenets, the department faculty examined, unpacked and annotated the tenets, and in so doing, explored and articulated the underlying Christian beliefs and assumptions about God, humankind, reality, knowledge, truth, etc., particularly those that are critical to understanding a Christian view of a specific discipline. This exercise was also beneficial in uniting the faculty regarding faith-integration in their areas. The exercise facilitated debate, disagreement, and agreement, but the final product was owned by the entire faculty after obtaining a consensus.

2. *Delineation of a faith-learning integration philosophy for the undergraduate discipline.* This step required an examination of the outcomes and other aspects of the discipline that invite or require Christian interpretation. In light of Christian theology (as explored in Step 1), each department developed responses to the six faith-learning domains. This was a lengthy process; departments were given approximately six months to complete this task, which resulted in the creation of a substantive document.
3. *Delineation of a Christ-honoring, biblically-informed canon required for mastery of the undergraduate discipline.* This step required faculty to consider the essential resources necessary to achieve mastery of the discipline and develop an in-depth understanding of faith and the discipline; that is, Step 3 supports Step 2. From an implementation perspective, this was the easiest step for most departments, as many already had preferred texts for their programs; this step was typically completed in a couple of months.
4. *Application of a discipline-specific Christian worldview to the curriculum in support of the CAS mission.* This step required the application of the 10 pedagogical principles to the curriculum for each discipline; this application is demonstrated through the completion of a curriculum matrix as shown in Table 2. The matrix indicates the types of learning activities (e.g., readings, quizzes, assignments, lectures, etc.) that are or will be incorporated into each course within the discipline to support the principles. This step was the most demanding and time-consuming. For the most part, departments were permitted to set their own timetable for completion. Generally, this step was completed in 6–12 months. During this step, there were many cases when an assignment, lecture, exam or other activity to support a principle was

not in a course or represented anywhere in the curriculum. Faculty were encouraged to determine how an activity could be added, what it might look like, and when it could be reasonably introduced. The emphasis during this phase of the project was to identify shortcomings and create plans for addressing them. Also, not all principles had to be addressed in every course. This was a curriculum-level initiative; that is, the principles had to be addressed somewhere in the program’s curriculum; faith integration had to be demonstrable in each course, but each course did not need to address every aspect of faith integration.

From an administrative standpoint, the chair of each department was responsible for completing the four steps, engaging faculty along the way to facilitate the generation of the final product: a multi-page faith-learning integration report. These documents were reviewed by faculty, chairs, and peers, and approved by CAS leadership. The iterative review process was extensive – spanning approximately three years before the faith-learning plans for all departments were completed – and remained a priority initiative of CAS leadership. At that time, there were a total of eight departments participating in the initiative, including business, psychology, government, science and mathematics, and language and literature. At the end of the project, each department had submitted a “Faith-Learning and Mission Integration” report to the Dean’s Office with responses to all four phases. The section below offers samples from one of those reports.

### Sample Products

Sample integrative products are provided below for each of the four steps, drawn from materials developed by the History faculty. While specifics vary across disciplines, these samples reflect thoughtful application of the CAS framework to the development of a distinctly Christian and mission-aligned curriculum.

#### **Sample of Step 1 - Articulation of Theological Foundations**

The following is an example of an exploration of the second tenet of the Regent Statement of Faith developed by the History faculty. Note that even in this early stage of the process, connections to the discipline and faith were being made. To reiterate, this exercise was designed to ensure that the faculty stood on a firm theological foundation upon which to integrate mission and faith.

*Statement of Faith tenant: There is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

1. Because of the reality of one eternal God, we know the universe is meaningful and there is purpose to human history and our own lives and experiences (Isaiah 55:8-9, Romans 8:28, Romans 11:33-36).
2. The Trinity is God in community with Himself, affirming the significance of community to humans (John 17:20-23).
3. The economy of the Trinity is such that each person of the Trinity has different functions or primary activities. For example, the Father sent the Son into the world (John 3:16). The Son obeyed the Father and accomplished redemption for us (John 6:38). The Holy Spirit was sent by the Father and the Son to apply redemption to us (John 14:26; 16:12-15). The persons of the Trinity are equal in all attributes, but have distinct roles. (McMullen, 2014, p. 6)

***Sample of Step 2 - Delineation of a Faith-Learning Integration Philosophy for the Undergraduate Discipline***

In the example below, the Hasker-derived fourth domain, *disciplinary worldview contributions* is applied to the study of history. This domain requires investigation of how this discipline (History) enables Christians to understand God, His world, and fellow human beings differently than if the insights of the discipline were not available. Building on the theological foundations from Step 1, the faculty offer several ways that the discipline of History enhances the overall vision of reality in the light of Christ. In this sample, the History faculty demonstrate how their discipline can assist others to better connect faith to a richer understanding of social/political life and human nature.

a. Social and Political Life

The theological foundations above affirm that humankind, as created in the image of God, are relational beings. This theological understanding is supported by the discipline of History in their assertion that human beings are social and political beings. These disciplines concern themselves with some of the most fundamental human relationships such as friend, citizen and neighbor. When approached from a Christian perspective, these programs address essential life questions such as “what are good, just and virtuous communities?”

b. Human Nature

The discipline of History helps the student recognize the reality of humankind as created in the image of God but marred by the sinful nature. Studies in these fields remind the Christian that the fully good society, the fully just society and the fully virtuous society are never possible within the bounds of earthly history. Examination of human civilizations, political systems and systems of justice affirm the existence of universal principles in the world such as sin. At the same time, human characteristics grounded in the *Imago Dei* such as the ability to love or the desire for community can also be identified. Therefore, while the perfectly good, just and virtuous society can only come with the consummation of the Kingdom of God, Christians should not despair because worthy attempts have been and can be made. (McMullen, 2014, pp. 18-19)

***Sample of Step 3 - Delineation of a Christ-honoring, Biblically-Informed Canon Required for Mastery of the Undergraduate Discipline***

The faculty were required to delineate the books and other resources that provided support for the faith-integration project and related principles in their disciplines. The History faculty offered selections from Augustine of Hippo, *The Analects* by Confucius, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by Gibbons, Selections from *The Persian Wars* by Herodotus, Locke’s *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Plato’s *Republic*, and many others.

***Sample of Step 4 - Application of a Discipline-Specific Christian Worldview to the Curriculum in Support of the CAS Mission***

Table 2 below shows the application of the 10 principles within several history courses. Each course must demonstrate that there is at least one artifact that supports at least one of the 10 principles. The artifact types are as follows: (1) reading, (2) discussion, (3) assignment, (4) activity, (5) lecture, (6) quiz/exam, or (7) some other type. The numbers (see Note) next to each course reflect how the course supports the faith-learning principle and mission.

Table 2: Faith-Integration Student Tasks

<i>Mission and Faith-Learning Integration Matrix</i>											
Crs	Found- ation		Cherish Character			Challenge Culture				Serve the World	
	1. Become proficient		2. Grow in knowledge, wisdom, and understand- ing	3. Eval- uate ethical princi- ples	4. Model Christ- ian values	5. Discov- er differ- ences	6. Find com- mon ground	7. Fill the gaps	8. Trans- form the cul- ture	9. Reflect a serv- ant's heart	10. Under- stand kingdom service
<b>HIST 101</b>	2	1	5, 6			5	3				
<b>HIST 102</b>	2	1	5, 6	2		5	3				
<b>HIST 201</b>	[2]	1	5		[3]						
<b>HIST 202</b>	[2]	1	5						2		
<b>HIST 211</b>	[2]	1	[5]	5			[2]			1, [3/2]	
<b>HIST 212</b>	[2]	1	[5]	5			[2]			1, [3/2]	
<b>HIST 301</b>	3	1	5, 3	5,4	5	5, 1,2		[1,5] , 3			3

*Note:* The numbers provided in the matrix represent the types of assignments that reinforce the principles. Codes: 1=reading, 2=discussion, 3=assignment, 4=activity, 5=lecture, 6=quiz/exam, 7=other; codes with brackets [ ] indicate tasks that will be (but are not currently) incorporated into the curriculum. From McMullen, J. (2014, March 28). *Faith-learning integration: Department of Government, History, Criminal Justice, and International Studies*. [Unpublished internal document]. Regent University.

For example, Principle 2 (*Grow in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding*) addresses the mission element, *Cherish Character*, and the faith-learning domains *Disciplinary Foundations* and *Applied Theological Foundations*, and is addressed in History 102 through lectures (Code 5) and quizzes/exams (Code 6). Similarly, the same principle is addressed in History 301 through lectures (Code 5) and assignments (Code 3).

Table 3 below provides an excerpt of the alignments for individual course tasks, drawn from HIST 102. For example,

Principle 2 (Grow in Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding) requires the student to identify and evaluate underlying disciplinary pre-suppositions and contradictions; identify and evaluate the fundamental insights and convictions of a Christian worldview relevant to the discipline. In History 102, this principle is addressed through a lecture (Code 5) on historical analysis and the Christian faith. Principle 3 (Evaluate Ethical Principles) is supported by a discussion (Code 2) of the Marxist approach to history.

Table 3: Faith-Integration Student Tasks- HIST 102

Principle	Code	Task
1a	2	Students participate in a discussion that requires them to compare and contrast the Mesopotamian and Egyptian views of God with the biblical view of God.
1b	1	Students read selections from the program canon.
2	5, 6	Students listen to a lecture about historical analysis and the Christian faith. An exam question assesses their grasp of this lecture.
3	2	Students evaluate the Marxist approach to history and its reductionist approach to humans and human society. They then compare this to a biblical understanding of God's sovereignty, human purpose and history
4	[ ]	Not addressed
5	5	Students receive a lecture about the <i>Imago Dei</i> and the fallen nature of humankind
6	3	Students are required to reflect on historical understandings of the good life in comparison with the biblical understanding of the good life.
7	[ ]	Not addressed
8	[ ]	Not addressed
9	[ ]	Not addressed
10	[ ]	Not addressed

*Note:* The numbers provided in the matrix represent the types of assignments that reinforce the principles. Codes: 1=reading, 2=discussion, 3=assignment, 4=activity, 5=lecture, 6=quiz/exam, 7=other; codes with brackets [ ] indicate tasks that will be (but are not currently) incorporated into the curriculum. From McMullen, J. (2014, March 28). *Faith-learning integration: Department of Government, History, Criminal Justice, and International Studies*. [Unpublished internal document]. Regent University.

As mentioned earlier, during this step there were many cases when an assignment, lecture, exam or other activity to support a principle was not in a course or represented anywhere in the curriculum. This process offered an opportunity for faculty to adjust and create plans for implementation.

### Discussion

#### Identifying Challenges

This initiative represented a massive undertaking, requiring much review, editing, course analysis and (re)development, potential program changes, debate, etc. Along the way,

several challenges were identified. One such challenge is the effort required for maintenance. As curriculum, courses, and assignments evolve, so must the matrix. The matrix and other elements of the project require regular review and updates. Without diligence, the project can become dated and inaccurate in its ability to reflect integration in the curriculum. Moreover, creating the matrix is one thing; updating all the courses is another. For some departments the latter process took months and, in some cases, years to complete, only to begin again as courses changed. Another challenge relates to the fact that faculty members vary in their abilities to think Christianly about their disciplines. For CAS, some departments completed the project in six months while others took three years. It's important for the stronger to help the weaker in these circumstances with peers

providing assistance, and leaders offering support and patience with the process. While a challenge, this process was also a strength because it provided a tangible opportunity for individuals to learn faith-integration while also learning as a community of scholars. A third challenge is related to shifting departments. In CAS, disciplines within a particular department as well as the faculty periodically shift. This change requires review and updating of the documents. Finally, all of this is hard, time-consuming work. With faculty busy with scholarship, teaching and service, it is tempting to not allocate enough time and resources to the project. Moreover, not all Christian faculty are interested in rigorous faith integration to this level. Commitment from department chairs and deans is critical to success. Workload release from teaching or service can provide time for faculty members to participate. Department chair commitment and expertise are without exception the most important criteria for success.

### Current Status

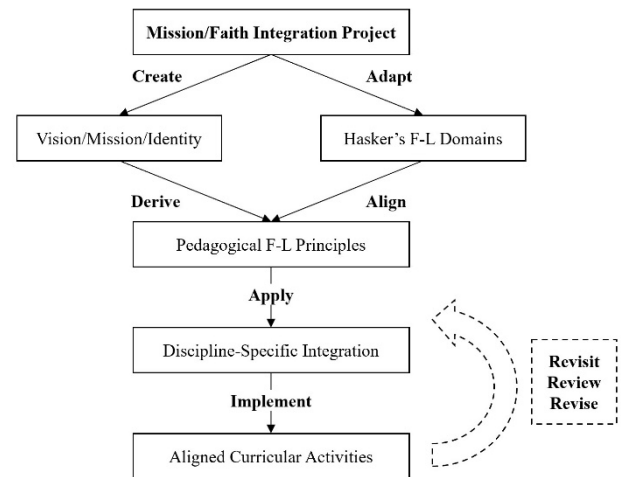
The faith-integration matrix has not been updated since the COVID shut-down; however, CAS will re-focus its efforts on the faith-integration process, implementing a “revisit – review – revise” strategy. The plan begins with the dean directing CAS’s Academic Service Managers (ASMs), staff members who support the academic operations of the College, to review the matrices for every department. They will compare the information listed on the matrices with what is in the current courses. They will confirm that the information listed in the matrix remains true, or they will flag the assignment as being out-of-date. Next, faculty will be asked to meet to review the faith-integration documents as a department. This meeting will be focused on any needed changes or modifications to the language of the document. The next step will require departments to review the matrix. Using the information provided by ASMs, the departments will update their matrices. For new programs, department chairs and faculty will begin the four-phase faith-integration process described in this paper. From beginning to end the process could take up to three years for these new programs. An overview of the entire process is shown in Figure 1 below.

### Moving Forward

Moving forward, CAS must address some of the continuing challenges posed by this systematic approach to faith-integration. First, CAS is looking for ways to simplify the matrix so that its maintenance is less time-consuming. One possible solution is to reverse the matrix. Instead of listing each class and every assignment in that class that relates to one of the 10 principles, CAS is considering listing the 10 principles and then identifying some key assignments in the

curriculum that meet that principle. Another possible solution would be to only identify one assignment per course to plug into the matrix. Although the course may have additional assignments that match one of the 10 principles, only one assignment would be listed. Both of these approaches would ensure that the 10 principles are being covered in the curriculum but reduce the amount of time need to the maintain the matrix.

Figure 1: Integration Project Overview



Second, CAS is searching for ways to introduce this faith-integration process to new faculty in a deeper and more meaningful way. One of the great benefits of this project was not simply the end-product, but the process itself. The project ensured that faculty were thinking deeply about faith-integration for up to three years. A cursory introduction or even a careful reading of a department’s document by a new faculty member cannot replicate that beneficial period of deep reflection.

Finally, CAS currently does not have a convenient way to identify where books of the canon are being taught. For example, there is no matrix identifying which courses incorporate which books. This means that the canon cannot be easily updated or confirmed unless an individual systematically goes through the whole curriculum. This makes continuous improvement and maintenance exceedingly difficult and labor-intensive. CAS must identify a better way forward regarding updating and confirming books in the canon.

### Conclusion

The College of Arts & Sciences began its mission/faith-learning journey many years ago in 2010, and that journey continues today. The commitment to the integration project has remained steadfast, but CAS has had to rethink

some things and adjust, accordingly. While there was a clear plan and process for implementation, CAS continued to learn, fine-tune, and re-calibrate their approach. The organization learned that not all departments were able to integrate their disciplines at the same speed, as faculty integrative competency and discipline complexity varied significantly. CAS also underestimated the effort required to build and maintain the mission and faith-learning matrices, but continued to develop approaches to streamline the processes. As department personnel shift and disciplines within departments change, CAS continues to seek ways to make the integration and update process more manageable for faculty and department chairs. The challenges are many, but Regent's commitment to the process remains firm.

The two most impactful outcomes of this project have been (1) demonstrating to students how their faith matters in all things, and (2) the growth and fellowship experienced by the faculty. Regarding the former – and while certainly not perfect – CAS is closer than ever to reaching the goal of students encountering Christian integration wherever they “slice the curriculum.” From the faculty perspective, the process of discussing, debating, disagreeing, and finding common ground regarding the best ways to apply faith to their disciplines has been blessing, not only to them, but to the university and, in humility, to God as well. This journey for both faculty and students is ultimately toward a transformation “into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18b).

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## Author Information

Michael Pregitzer  
Regent University  
[mpregitzer@regent.edu](mailto:mpregitzer@regent.edu)

Jason D. Baker  
Regent University  
[jasobak@regent.edu](mailto:jasobak@regent.edu)

Josh McMullen  
Regent University  
[jmcmullen@regent.edu](mailto:jmcmullen@regent.edu)

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<sup>1</sup> For purposes of consistency and clarity, “CAS” will be the nomenclature used going forward to indicate both the former “School of Undergraduate Studies” and the current “College of Arts & Sciences.”

<sup>2</sup> Note: All scriptural references in this document are from the English Standard Version.