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CONSTITUENT UNDERSTANDINGS AND PERCEPTIONS

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# "EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE": CONSTITUENT UNDERSTANDINGS AND PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

"EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE":
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The terminology "evangelical Christian" appears to have great breadth of definition. Many diverse church traditions and social movements align themselves with this title and claim it as their heritage. Within this diversity many colleges and universities in the United States continue to define themselves as evangelical Christian colleges. These colleges often align themselves with particular churches or denominations while drawing students, faculty, etc., from a broader constituent base that may or may not share the same definition of "evangelical Christian" college.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to assess the understanding of the terminology "evangelical Christian" college as held by various constituents associated with Spring Arbor College. This study recognizes that these constituents (parents, students, pastors, board members, alumni, faculty and staff) may have different understandings of the words "evangelical Christian" college and, therefore, may have been attracted to the institution for different reasons. Findings, however, indicate general agreement concerning key theological and social distinctives with some noted dissent from faculty, students and some board members.

The implications of this study for Spring Arbor College include a heightened awareness of constituent expectations and clarity of institutional

identity and priorities. Recognition of these factors by the constituent groups may enable them to work together more effectively for the enhancement of community and the pursuit of common goals and objectives.

Dedicated to Seth and Cobi.

*"As iron sharpens iron, let one man sharpen another"*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS


CHAPTER 1
PRESENTATON OF PROBLEM..... 1
Statement of Purpose..... 2
Research Questions..... 2
Research Problem..... 2
Rationale and Significance of the Study..... 3
The Evangelical Distinctive..... 3
Confusion Over the Definition of Evangelical..... 5
College Selection..... 6
Accreditation and Assessment..... 7
Role-modeling and Mentoring..... 10
Summary..... 11
Conceptual Framework..... 11
Focus on Definition..... 12
Trigger Issues/Dimensions of Inquiry..... 12
Key Stakeholders..... 14
Summary..... 14
Organization of the Study..... 15

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW..... 17
The Evangelical Movement..... 17
Historical Context..... 17
The Great Awakening and its Impact on Evangelicalism..... 19
Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism..... 20
New Evangelicals..... 22
Summary..... 24
Theological and Social Expectations of Evangelicals..... 26
Theological Implications..... 26
Social Implications..... 30
Summary..... 32
Evangelical Higher Education..... 33
Religious/Utilitarian Emphasis..... 33
The Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy..... 37
Evangelical Colleges..... 39
Summary..... 40
Spring Arbor College: An Evangelical Institution..... 42
Free Methodism..... 43
Free Methodism and Education..... 44
Founding of Spring Arbor Seminary..... 46
The Holiness Movement..... 47
Entering the Twentieth Century..... 47
The Depression Years..... 50

Spring Arbor Junior College..... 51
A Four Year College..... 53
Summary..... 56
College Selection..... 57
Parental Influence..... 57
Student Selection..... 59
Consumer Perspective..... 61
Summary..... 62
Accreditation and Assessment..... 63
Summary..... 65
Summary of Literature Review..... 66

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY..... 69
Statement of purpose..... 69
Research questions..... 69
Research problem..... 70
Rationale and Methodology..... 70
Paradigm..... 71
Qualitative/Quantitative Model..... 73
Population and Sample Selection..... 73
Qualitative..... 75
Quantitative..... 78
Description of Instrument..... 80
Qualitative..... 80
Quantitative..... 81
Procedures for Collecting Data..... 84
Qualitative..... 84
Quantitative..... 86
Data Analysis..... 87
Qualitative..... 87
Quantitative..... 88
Limitations..... 92
Summary..... 93

CHAPTER 4
PRESENTATION OF DATA..... 95
Section 1: Qualitative Data..... 95
Summary of Qualitative Data Analysis..... 127
Section 2: Quantitative Data..... 131
Descriptive Data..... 131
Similarities..... 135
Differences..... 138
Summary of Quantitative Data Analysis..... 142

CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS..... 143
Overview of Study..... 143
Research Questions..... 143
Summary of Literature Review..... 144
Methodological Assumptions..... 146

Findings..... 146
Areas of Agreement..... 147
Areas of Disagreement..... 153
Summary of Findings..... 157
Discussion..... 159
Definitions are Strong and Clear..... 159
Definitions validate the Literature Review..... 161
Dissent Comes from the Perceived "Power Base"..... 161
Students and Faculty may be the Bell Weather of Social Shift.... 161
The Classroom is Critical.....163
An Open Discussion is Important..... 164
The Integration of Faith and Learning is a Priority..... 164
Definition is Constructed Through Transactions..... 165
Summary..... 166
Recommendations for Action..... 168
Recommendations for Further Research..... 172
Limitations..... 174

APPENDICES..... 177

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....193

# INTRODUCTION

"Jesus Christ, don't you know the answer to the question . . .?" A confused mother quoted these words as she recounted the manner in which a Spring Arbor College professor had confronted her son. In exasperation she continued: "I chose Spring Arbor College for my son because I thought it was a Christian college - I didn't expect him to have professors that use the Lord's name in vain."

As Vice President for Student Development of Spring Arbor College, I have fielded many similar concerns over the years. My usual response to such questions has been: "I understand. We are a Christian college and we take our commitment to evangelical values very seriously. I will talk to the appropriate administrator or professor and get back to you." But does this response recognize the depth implicit in the original concern? Do these complaints and questions address something deeper than what can be corrected by a "talk" with the appropriate administrator or faculty member? Such questions, in fact, may reflect the very understanding a person has regarding the College's unique identity and definition. Such concerns are usually from people who choose a college for a very specific reason - - people who choose a college because of what they understand it to be (and what they believe it not to be); people who choose a college because of the professed values and beliefs of its faculty and staff; people who choose Spring Arbor because of its claim to be an "evangelical Christian" college.

# CHAPTER ONE: PRESENTATION OF PROBLEM

## Statement of Purpose

The focus of this investigation is Spring Arbor College, a four-year liberal arts institution accredited by the North Central Association. The College is affiliated with the Free Methodist Church of North America and is a member of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities. It specifically defines itself as an evangelical Christian college.

### *Research Questions*

The purpose of this study was to determine what the terminology "evangelical Christian" means when a college uses it as part of its definition. Using Spring Arbor College as a case example, the research question was as follows:

What does the distinction "evangelical Christian" mean to the institution's relevant stakeholders? More specifically:

- What do the College's personnel (faculty, staff, administration, and board) understand "evangelical Christian" college to mean?
- What do the College's primary constituency groups (i.e. students, parents, pastors) understand "evangelical Christian" college to mean?
- What range of understandings exists among the College's relevant stakeholders regarding the meaning of "evangelical Christian" college?

*Research Problem*

The above questions were asked within the context of perceived definitional ambiguity regarding the meaning of the words "evangelical Christian" college. The assumption of this study was that students, parents, and pastors who choose to affiliate with Spring Arbor have a specific understanding of what "evangelical Christian" college means, socially and theologically, while the faculty, staff, administration and board members may or may not share the same definition.

## Rationale and Significance of the Study

Why does this question of definition matter? Why is it important or significant to pursue a more complete understanding of the perceptions held by various Spring Arbor College stakeholders concerning the terminology "evangelical Christian college"? The following represents a rationale for such a study.

*The Evangelical Distinctive*

The American academy is noted for its diversity. Presently the United States boasts over 3500 institutions of higher education (Peterson's, 1996, p. 4). Two-year junior colleges, technical and trade schools, research universities, and four-year liberal arts colleges, both religious and secular, are just a few examples of the educational choices available to today's student. Each of these institutions naturally makes claim to its own values, philosophies, goals and objectives. Such institutional distinctives differentiate one educational option from another, drive curricular and co-curricular design, and serve as the

foundation for college catalogues, student handbooks and other promotional materials where each institution highlights its unique advantages, characteristics and programs.

Among these many institutions of higher education are four-year liberal arts colleges and universities that identify themselves as "evangelical Christian." The Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU), comprised of 91 members and educating a cumulative student body of over 155,000 students represents many such institutions. Virtually all of these member colleges and universities claim their institutional heritage and current definition is grounded in a commitment to the Christian faith and, more specifically, the theological convictions, behavioral norms, and social expectations associated with the evangelical Christian movement. The CCCU, founded in 1976, traces its origin and founding impetus to the Commission on Higher Education of the National Association of Evangelicals (Longman, 1997, p. 1). CCCU colleges distinguish themselves from other liberal arts institutions as being "Christ-centered" and by their traditional commitment to Protestant orthodoxy and evangelical Christianity. This definitional distinction is what is purported to make attendance at or support of these colleges and universities worthy of consideration over and above other educational options (Longman, 1996, p. 4; Peterson's, 1996, pp. 4-11).

Spring Arbor College, a CCCU member, specifically claims the definition "evangelical Christian." The 1999-2000 Spring Arbor College Catalog (1999, p. 8) states that Spring Arbor College is "an evangelical Christian college affiliated with the Free Methodist Church . . . where a faculty of Christian scholars integrates faith with [learning]." This evangelical distincition is also grounded in Spring Arbor College's history. One example is found in a 1959 report to the

North Central Association, where Spring Arbor College not only distinguished itself by the terminology "evangelical Christian" but also considered its primary constituency to be the evangelical population and its primary competition to be other regional evangelical colleges. Here the college confirmed its evangelical identity and used it as a positive distinction as it argued for accreditation as a four-year institution. This report stated:

> A second factor which [is] internal in nature but external in implication [is] the evidence that the State of Michigan [needs] another evangelical Christian college. A survey of Michigan students in evangelical Christian colleges in the surrounding states [shows] that the second largest source for the student population, following the home state, [is] Michigan (as cited in Snyder, 1973).

*Confusion Over the Definition of "Evangelical"*

If identification with evangelical Christianity distinguishes Spring Arbor College from other colleges and universities, it may be significant to ask the question: What does "evangelical Christian" mean as a descriptor for a liberal arts college? Is there a common definition that leads different constituencies of the college to a clear understanding concerning this distinction?

According to church historian, Tim Weber, (1991, p. 5), "defining evangelicalism has become one of the biggest problems in American religious historiography." Over the past two decades other scholars have concurred. For example, David Wells (1987, p. 37) described evangelicalism as a "sprawling empire, frequently at odds with itself, its cohesion and intellectual coherence in jeopardy." Donald W. Dayton (1991, p. 245) went further: "The category

'evangelical' has lost whatever usefulness it once might have had." And finally, Harold Heie (1997, p. 246) indicated that the task of defining the term evangelical is considerably complicated by the lack of agreement as to what it means to be an evangelical Christian: "the term evangelical is a contested concept, the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes . . . Various attempts at defining evangelical are fraught with shortcomings."

Whether or not such analysis is accurate, there can be little question that evangelicalism in the last half of this century has become increasingly difficult to understand and describe. Attempts at numerical estimates of evangelicals in the United States reflect this confusion. The National Association of Evangelicals and the evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* have estimated total numbers to be between 25 and 30 million, while the Gallup Organization reported over 66 million (Rosell, 1996, p. 11). This discrepancy demonstrates the continuing need to examine the nature, direction and definition of the evangelical movement.

*College Selection*

In a larger sense, colleges and universities are chosen because of what they are believed to be by the stakeholders who choose to affiliate with these institutions. For example, parental influence and student perceptions are primary reasons leading to Christian college selection. Parents and students choose Christian colleges because of affinity to a sponsoring denomination and the perception that such colleges have safe and moral atmospheres (Moss and Cockriel, 1990, pp. 6-7). T. S. Elliot (1965, pp. 75-76) stated that "Every definition of the purpose of education . . . implies some concealed or rather implicit, philosophy or theology. In choosing one definition rather than another

*we are attracted to the one because it fits better* [italics added] with our answer to the question: What is Man For?" The educational experience is one of "seeking pattern, order, form and significance. To be human is to seek coherence" (Parks, 1986, p. 14).

If it is true that students and parents choose one institution over another because of the perception of "fit," as well as the coherence implied and perpetuated by a college's defining documents, then it may be appropriate to seek further understanding of what our defining language communicates and the perceptions it may foster. To accommodate this expectation of "fit," it is necessary to come to a clearer understanding of what it means when a college claims to be "evangelical Christian."

*Accreditation and Assessment*

Assuming that colleges and universities have self-imposed definitions and people choose one college over another because of the perception of fit, what obligation do we as educators have to model the values and provide the direction we implicitly and explicitly declare in our mission statements, promotional materials and other defining documents?

Alexander Astin (1993, p.5), in his call for institutional assessment, asked the question: "What specific policies and practices in higher education do we justify . . . What really matters to us? Where do we direct our attention, and to what ends do we direct our energies . . . What, in other words, are the values that govern our efforts?" Astin contended that "reputation" is one of the basic concepts that govern what educational institutions do. He went on to argue that "reputational excellence" is based on the assumption that the best colleges and

universities are those that enjoy the best reputations. These reputations are largely based on the "belief systems" of the institution's stakeholders. The beliefs and perceptions associated with a given college have a direct bearing on the reputation and corresponding expectations of that institution. Assessment matters because it is a direct reflection of what the college values. Consequently, assessment of beliefs and perceptions is important because it reflects the "reputation" that serves to attract people to the college or university in the first place.

This concept is central to the accrediting process. The 1994-1996 North Central Association (NCA) Handbook of Accreditation identified the following criteria for accreditation:

- The institution has a *clear stated purpose* [italics added] consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.
- The institution has effectively organized the human, financial and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes.
- The institution is *accomplishing its educational and other purposes* [italics added].
- The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.
- The institution *demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships* [italics added]. (NCA, 1994 pp. 33-35).

The NCA further stated that, for accreditation, a college must demonstrate "appropriate patterns of evidence" such as:

- Decision-making processes that are appropriate to its stated mission and purposes

- Understanding of the *stated purposes by institutional constituencies* [italics added].
- Efforts to *keep the public informed* [italics added] of its educational goals through documents such as the catalog and program brochures.
- Institutional *publications, statements, and advertising that describe accurately and fairly the institution* [Italics added], its operation and programs (NCA, 1994, pp.33-35).

In these criteria NCA not only acknowledged the reality of unique institutional values, goals and purposes, but it also mandated measurement of a college's adherence to its distinctive purpose and self-definition. These guidelines specifically call for clarity in communicating to its respective constituencies. Adhering to stated institutional values is therefore motivated by both the self-evident priority of honesty and a pragmatic call for the validation of corporate integrity set forth by the accrediting process. Colleges and universities must be what they claim to be. Arthur Holmes (1975) aptly summarized this call for consistent and clear messaging:

> Faulty expectations generate public relations problems and these add a needless burden to the problems of higher education today . . . we need to get back to the basics, to the underlying and central reason for existing at all. Otherwise the student and the college may both lapse in "bad faith" into the faceless anonymity of people and places without distinctive meaning and become mere statistics in the educational almanac (p. 4).

*Role-Modeling and Mentoring*

This integrity of institutional mission and message is primarily expressed

in the context of human relationships. According to Peter Berger (1974):

> Meaning systems, moreover, are not mere intellectual exercises, but *must be lived collectively; constant interaction with other people who perceive and interpret reality in the same way as oneself* [Italics added] is necessary if one's "nomos" is to be automatically effective in imbuing one's everyday experience with meaning (as cited by Garber, 1996, p. 87).

The student is able to traverse the chasm between rhetoric and reality only over the "bridge" of the exemplary behavior of respected mentors, that is, faculty and staff who live out the ideals and values espoused by the institution. It is this role-modeling, grounded in a common understanding of the college's expectations and values, that encourages students to claim such ideals as their own.

Steve Garber (1996) emphasized that learning involves moving beyond "knowing" to "knowing how." It is in the example of another that we learn to "know how." Connectedness, that is, integrity between belief and behavior, between orthodoxy and orthopraxy, is found in the example of respected others. It is the constant interaction with a mentor that provides the "how" that shapes lives of consistency, integrity and faithfulness (pp.125-140).

If a college is to guide the lives of its students in the direction it promotes through its defining documents, the faculty and staff must provide mentorship that "incarnates the substance of the worldview" the institution claims to embrace (Garber, 1996, pp. 125-140). "Young people assimilate [values] more from example than precept . . . Values can be caught from the contagious example of a community at work . . . from a community of enthusiastic and well-equipped scholars who infect their students with [their values and example]" (Holmes,

1975, p. 82). The teacher works "loyally within the framework of reference to which one stands committed . . . The teacher in the evangelical institution operates within the framework of belief confessed by his college" and is "transparently Christian" in efforts to "convey truth through personality" (p.82). William Bennett (1994) summarized this from the converse perspective: "If the life of the campus is indifferent [toward a given issue of behavior] then the lesson transmitted is that ethics are to be talked about, but not lived" (p. 163).

*Summary*

A college's definition, therefore, matters. First, it matters because schools like Spring Arbor College intentionally claim "evangelical Christianity" in their defining documents (Spring Arbor College, 1999, p. 8). Second, it matters because the literature demonstrates confusion regarding the actual meaning of the words "evangelical Christian," and different stakeholders may have different expectations and understandings concerning the definition of these terms and how they apply (Weber, 1991, p. 33). Third, the question of definition matters because people choose colleges and universities according to their perceptions of "fit" (Moss and Cockriel, 1990, pp. 8-10). They choose one college rather than another because they are attracted to the definition (college) that best fits with their expectations and desires for a college experience. Fourth, the question of definition matters because colleges are called by accrediting agencies to demonstrate clarity and integrity in what they communicate to their respective constituents (NCA, 1996, pp. 33-35). Finally, the question of definition matters because of what is conveyed through role-modeling and mentoring.

## Conceptual Framework

Building upon this rationale, the conceptual framework for this case study consisted of three components. First, the focus of this study was on the definition of the words "evangelical Christian" as they are used to describe Spring Arbor College. Second, this study accepted the pertinence of central trigger issues, or dimensions of inquiry, that are relevant to the understanding of "evangelical Christian" college. Finally, this study recognized specific college stakeholders, including personnel (faculty, staff, and administration), parents, students, pastors, trustees and alumni. Further explanation of these contextual components follows.

### *Focus on definition*

This study revolved around the definition of the words "evangelical Christian" college. As indicated earlier, and as will be supported through further literature review, the understanding and corresponding use of these words is confusing and fraught with various theological and social assumptions (Kantzer, 1990, pp. 27-37, 69-80). The historical background associated with evangelical Christianity, and the contemporary critique of its multiple subcultures, demonstrates clearly that the term "evangelical Christian" is a contested concept open to dispute (Heie, 1997, p. 246). Within the context of this dispute, Spring Arbor College chooses to use the words "evangelical Christian" as part of its definition. Thus, a clearer understanding of the various stakeholder's definitions of these words is warranted.

*Trigger issues/Dimensions of inquiry*

Although there is confusion associated with the terminology "evangelical Christian," there is evidence of some commonly accepted dimensions of inquiry or "trigger issues" that are associated with the definition of these words. Green, Guth, Smidt and Kelstedt, (1996, p. 244) identified four criteria that they believe to be central to "evangelical Christianity": 1) belief that salvation comes only through faith in Jesus Christ; 2) experience of conversion; 3) belief in evangelism, that is, mission outreach/ proselytizing; and 4) belief in the truth of scripture. Garth Rosell (1996, p. 9) confirmed the pertinence of these criteria. He summarized the words of Harold Ockenga, one of the founders of the National Association of Evangelicals, and contended that evangelicals are united by "a common authority (the Bible), a common experience (conversion), a common conviction (that salvation is to be found only in the atoning work of Christ), and a common mission (worldwide evangelism)." David Bebbington (1989, pp, 2-14) similarly noted four specific hallmarks of evangelicalism: "*conversionism,* the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross." Thus, at the core of evangelical Christian thought are four basic dimensions of inquiry or "trigger issues" that can be summarized in the following questions: 1) What does one believe about the Bible? 2) What does one believe about salvation? 3) What does one believe about Jesus Christ? and 4) What does one believe about proselytizing or evangelism?

In addition to these theological dimensions, there is also a social discussion taking place within evangelical Christianity. An examples of this can

be seen in the critique offered by the National Association of Evangelicals concerning such issues as human sexuality, abortion, alcohol and tobacco use, gambling, pornography, etc. (National Association of Evangelicals, 1997). This study assumes that a definition of "evangelical Christian" college will include a discussion of these issues and positions. Evangelical colleges must be very sensitive to the "boundaries that are operative among their church and alumni constituencies" (Hughes and Adrian, 1997, p. 258). These boundaries may help set the context for the discussion of definition and meaning.

*Key Stakeholders*

As cited earlier, institutional reputation is largely based on the "belief systems" of the college's constituency. The beliefs and perceptions associated with a given college have a direct bearing on the reputation and corresponding expectations that institution enjoys (Astin, 1993, p. 6). These perceptions govern what institutions do and dictate where they place their resources and energies (Astin, 1993, p.6). Assessment of various stakeholder understandings of the words "evangelical Christian" will expose what interested and vested parties believe and value, and what "reputations" attract them to Spring Arbor College.

For the purposes of this study, Spring Arbor College stakeholders are assumed to be parents of currently enrolled students, current students, Free Methodist pastors of sponsoring conferences, alumni, board members, and college faculty and staff.

## Summary

The purpose of this study, then, was to assess the understanding of the terminology "evangelical Christian" college held by various stakeholders associated with Spring Arbor College. Definitional distinctives, definitional clarity, college selection, accreditation, mentoring and the central dimensions of inquiry or "trigger issues" together represent the contextual boundaries for this study. This study recognized that various constituent groups (parents, students, pastors, board members and personnel) may have different understandings of the words "evangelical Christian" college and may have been, therefore, attracted to the institution for different reasons. The implications of this study for Spring Arbor College include a heightened awareness of expectations and clarity of institutional identity and priorities. Recognition of these factors by the constituent groups may enable them to work together more intelligently for the enhancement of community and the pursuit of common goals and objectives.

## Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction by stating the problem, the purpose, the rationale and significance of the study. This chapter also provides the conceptual framework, including the assumptions and limitations within which the study is conducted. Chapter 2 provides a review of the relevant literature. This review includes literature concerning the historical development of evangelical Christianity, reasons for college selection, theological and social implications associated with the evangelical movement, the contextualization of evangelical Christian colleges within the broader scheme of American higher education, and a review of Spring

Arbor College and its relationship to evangelical Christianity. There is also a discussion of assessment and accreditation and its corresponding relevance to institutional definition. Chapter 3 provides a description of the procedures used to conduct the study. Included in this chapter is a review of the proposed qualitative/quantitative model, the selection of the population and sample, and methodology for data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study in a qualitative and quantitative format. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings and a discussion of the conclusions, implications and limitations of the study.

# CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to present a review of literature in the following areas: 1) the contemporary evangelical movement and its historical development; 2) theological and social expectations associated with evangelical Christianity; 3) the evangelical movement and its relationship to American higher education; 4) Spring Arbor College and its identification with evangelical Christianity; 5) reasons for parent and student college selection; and 6) a discussion of assessment and accreditation and the corresponding importance of clearly communicating college identity.

## The Evangelical Movement

Since Spring Arbor College defines itself as an evangelical Christian institution, it is important to understand the broader context of what it means to be an "evangelical Christian." This section is structured in four parts. First, the historical context of the evangelical movement is reviewed. Second, the impact of the Great Awakening on evangelicalism is critiqued. Third, twentieth-century evangelicalism and the modernist/fundamentalist debate are discussed. Finally, the "New Evangelical" phenomenon is clarified.

### *Historical Context*

What is an evangelical? How many are there, what are they like, what do they believe? How do they live, act and behave? In recent years a variety of scholars and journalists have sought to define this increasingly prominent

religious group. Terms such as fundamentalist, born-again Christian, conservative Protestant and "religious right" are routinely but confusedly used to describe all or part of evangelicalism (Green, Guth, Smidt and Kellstedt 1996, p. 240). Even those who adopt the label "evangelical" offer limited clarity. The word is a "disputed concept" even among insiders (Green, Guth, Smidt and Kellstedt 1996, p. 240), and one evangelical scholar goes so far as to recommend abandoning the term completely (Dayton, 1991, p. 245). Yet, as contested and confused as the term evangelical may be, there are between 30 and 66 million Americans who identify with this label (Kantzer, 1990, p. 28).

The word evangelical itself originates from the Greek word, *euangelion*, used in the New Testament to describe the "good news" of salvation through Jesus Christ (Kantzer 1990, p. 75; Webber 1978, p. 25). Martin Luther was the first to use the word "evangelical" to designate a specific party of theological persuasion within Christianity (Zimmerman, 1996, p. 60). His use of the word was a refutation of what he saw as the works-oriented soteriology of the Catholic Church and its lack of attention to *sola scriptura*, that is, scripture alone as the single and only authority for the Christian faith. Luther and his fellow reformers did not necessarily set out to establish new churches. Once there was a break with Rome, however, they moved quickly to create a church body with new priorities focused on an "evangelical" understanding of faith, stressing the authority of scripture and salvation by faith in Jesus Christ alone (Zimmerman, 1996, p. 60).

*The Great Awakening and its Impact on Evangelicalism*

Diane Zimmerman traced the emergence of contemporary evangelicalism back to the revivals of the Great Awakening, which took place from the middle 1700s to the early 1800s (Zimmerman, 1996, p. 78). This series of revivals was viewed as a "powerful force in the future development of American culture" and as having a "unifying effect" within the ranks of Protestantism. Characteristics of this newfound religious unity were a "renewed emphasis on Christian experience and the religious affections [which] led to the recovery of an old aspect of Puritanism: . . . an inclination to regard conversion and regeneration as a bond of fellowship." This unity of essential values and common Christian experience led to the virtually interchangeable and synonymous definitions of Protestant and evangelical, which lasted into the first half of the nineteenth century (Ahlstrom, 1972, p. 294).

In the middle 1800s evangelicalism became increasingly concerned with social action and the outward expressions of a Christian faith. According to Frank, evangelicals were not content to direct their energy toward personal reformation alone. In fact, the awakening of 1858-59 set the stage for a "tremendous advance in the interdenominational social and religious work, quickening the pace by which the churches Christianized the Land . . . for a brief period the churches themselves joined hands to usher in the kingdom of Christ" (Frank, 1986, pp. 22-24). Examples of social action associated with this movement were attacks upon slavery, poverty, and materialism, and the promotion of temperance, women's suffrage, racial and social equity and universal education (Smith, 1957, p. 235).

*Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism*

"The matrix out of which twentieth-century evangelicalism grew was the fundamentalist/modernist controversy identified with the first three decades of this century" (Webber, 1978, p. 28). Within this context evangelicalism began to splinter and lose its unity of definition and commonly held values. Two evolving groups characterized the tension in what had been a relatively unified Protestant church. Those concerned with the social gospel made up the first group. They were more receptive to the evolving shift in scientific reasoning, and they embraced evolutionary theory, Darwinian socialism and higher criticism (Hunter, 1983, p. 32; Zimmerman, 1996, p. 64). These champions of the social gospel emphasized that the "structures of society themselves were in need of redemption and that people who professed and worked for the coming of the Kingdom of God could make the difference." The second group advocated a personal gospel concerned with the validity of a "biblical Christianity" and the corresponding preservation of what they believed to be the fundamentals of the primitive gospel and historic apostolic orthodoxy (Webber, 1978, p. 28; Zimmerman, 1996, p. 64). This group believed in the saving of souls and that "believers should remain unspotted by the world," and thus focused on the biblical grounds for human salvation, personal values and individual life choices (Zimmerman, 1996, p. 64).

European modernism and its move away from what was considered to be orthodox Christianity set the stage for controversy and the corresponding splintering of the twentieth-century Protestant church. "Following the lead of Friedrich Schleiermacher . . . theologians were seeing in the Bible primarily a

record of the human experience with God and not God's Word to mankind" (Frank, 1986, p. 49). This modernist movement, otherwise known as higher criticism, furthered the division within the evangelical camp. "Personal gospellers" joined with the conservatives to defend long held positions of orthodoxy such as biblical inerrancy and the authority of the scriptures, while "social gospellers," focusing more on the outcomes of Christian principles, were more willing to identify with the broader brush strokes of modernism (Hunter, 1983, pp. 33-34; Zimmerman, 1996, pp. 63-65).

Conservative evangelicals, after separating from the adherents of higher criticism, experienced further fragmentation with the onset of fundamentalism in the early 1900s. The publication of *The Fundamentals, a Testimony to the Truth* (1910 -1915) spawned the birth of fundamentalism. This movement began as a defense against higher criticism. *The Fundamentals* spoke directly to the basics of Christian orthodoxy and the commitment to biblical authority. Formed to check the spread of the "New Christianity" (the social gospel, higher criticism, etc.), *The Fundamentals* systematically covered doctrinal issues relating to the inerrancy of the scriptures as well as other Christian doctrines such as the historicity of Christ and the existence of God. They also addressed the need for missions and evangelism and offered specific refutations of other religious systems (Hunter, 1983, p. 32). Marsden critically described the Fundamentalist movement:

> This militant anti-modernism expresses itself in the rigid preservation of popular nineteenth-century traditions, accompanied by strong claims about supernatural truth as opposed to naturalism. This impulse is seen

> in the continuing and widespread militancy . . . concerning the inerrancy of scripture (Marsden, 1980, p. 228).

Perhaps because of the rigidity and militancy described by Marsden, there was less than total unity within the Protestant ranks regarding fundamentalism. Some conservatives, while agreeing with the issue of orthodox interpretation of scriptural truth, found the rigidity and militancy of the fundamentalist movement a concern. Denominational splits began to occur, and the counterattack on liberal theology was fragmented. Evangelical hegemony was lost, and the word "evangelical" ceased to be used to describe the unified group of Christian believers (Webber, 1978, p. 29; Zimmerman, 1996, p. 68).

*New Evangelicals*

Following World War II, Protestant Christianity began to realign itself within two basic movements. The liberals--those who had accepted the postulates of higher criticism--coalesced in "ecumenism." The conservatives formed two separate groups. The first were the more militant and exclusive fundamentalists, known for their reactionary and adversarial stance. The second was the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), or the "New Evangelicals," lead by a group of scholars from conservative colleges and seminaries such as Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena, CA), Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia, PA), and Wheaton College (Wheaton, IL) (Zimmerman, 1996, p. 68). Some of the more noteworthy leaders of this new association of Christians who defined themselves as evangelicals were Billy Graham, Carl F. H. Henry, Edward Carnell, Harold Lindsell, and Harold Ockenga (Webber, 1978;

Zimmerman, 1996, p.68).

Martin further described this New Evangelical movement. He maintained that New Evangelicals were characterized as being more tolerant of minor theological differences while working together to defend the Christian faith with intellectual rigor and honesty:

> The term [new evangelical] signified a form of conservative Christianity that consciously marked itself off from old-line fundamentalism by its tolerance for minor theological differences among essentially like-minded believers, a conviction that evangelical faith could and should be set forth and defended in an intellectually rigorous manner rather than simply asserted dogmatically, and with a more positive attitude toward social reform than fundamentalists had held during the previous 25 years (as cited in Zimmerman, 1996,p.68).

These New Evangelicals distinguished themselves by their commitment to the fundamentals of the faith while at the same time overtly attempting to bring genuine social concern, renewed interest in intellectual sophistication, and sound scholarship with proactive dialogue back into the conservative Protestant church. In other words, this New Evangelical movement remained committed to the orthodoxy of the "fundamentals" but distinguished itself by its interest in the intellectual component of the faith. There was relative unity between the New Evangelicals (and their organization, the NAE) and the fundamentalists in matters of doctrine, but there were glaring distinctions in policy and approach. Where the fundamentalists held a rigid "no cooperation, no compromise" attitude, the NAE held a more conciliatory attitude of "cooperation without compromise."

New Evangelicals were determined to break with apostasy but went to great lengths to declare that they would not be reactionary, negative, destructive or separatist. Instead, there was a direct call for orthodox believers to engage their communities intellectually and socially in the discussion of truth (Hunter, 1983, p. 41; Webber, 1978, p. 30; Rosell, 1996, p. 8).

Out of this New Evangelical movement there developed a strong sub-cultural infrastructure intended to proactively engage society with the discussion of evangelical faith. Included in this infrastructure was the development of Christian radio and television and youth evangelistic organizations such as Youth for Christ, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. The mass evangelism of Billy Graham also symbolized the proactive engagement philosophy of the NAE and the New Evangelicals. The evangelical community also founded several liberal arts colleges during this time. These colleges were characterized by their attempt to be "true to doctrinal purity and the traditions of orthodox faith while at the same time engaging society in the pursuit of knowledge and truth as being something to be cherished and sought after and not feared" (Hunter, 1983, p. 44).

*Summary*

Contemporary evangelical Christianity stems from a distinctive tradition within the religious history of the American people. As a theological tradition it has attempted to remain bonded to the legacy of apostolic and Reformational orthodoxy (Noll, 1996, p. 29-30; Webber, 1978, p. 25). It is associated with various historical movements, three of which are: 1) the 16th-century Protestant

Reformation, 2) the revivalist movements in America in the 18th and 19th centuries, and 3) the 20th century post-fundamentalist, new-evangelical movement emerging after the modernist/fundamentalist controversy (Hughes and Adrian, 1997, pp. 1-9).

Between 1900 and 1940, evangelicals sought to find an appropriate position between liberalism and fundamentalism in a variety of ways. It was not until the 1940s that they began to identify as a larger, more cohesive group--a grouping once again using the term evangelical. By the last quarter of the twentieth century, evangelicalism again became the predominant term used to describe those conservative Christians who believed in the necessity of personal conversion, the deity of Jesus Christ, the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, and a Christian's obligation to evangelize.

It can be seen that in the historical and sociological evolution of the evangelical Christian subculture the terminology "evangelical Christian" has undergone numerous revisions. Perhaps one of the most pertinent summaries of the current state of the definition of the movement is seen in the words of Bruce Shelley (1996, p. 42). Citing the continuum of evangelical agendas from the Christian Right and Jerry Falwell to the Hutterite Bruderhofs, Shelley contended "The point is that there does not seem to be a single, unified agenda available for evangelicals today." From a more positive perspective, Timothy Smith (1996, p. 61) offered: "The evangelical mosaic is far more diverse and complex than any one of the groups that make it up. Indeed the glory of evangelicalism can be found, in part, in its rich diversity. And its constituent parts have much to learn from one another." In both critiques, whether it be the

negative flavor of Shelley or the positive optimism of Smith, it is evident that further clarifying what evangelical means would potentially add to a college's ability to understand its constituency and clarify its values.

## Theological and Social Expectations of Evangelicals

Despite the apparent disparity concerning the definition of the evangelical movement, there is evidence of some common theological and social themes. This section will focus on 1) the theological implications that are salient to the evangelical subculture; and 2) the consequent social distinctives commonly associated with evangelicalism.

### *Theological Implications*

"At the doctrinal core contemporary evangelicals can be identified by their adherence to: 1) the belief that the Bible is the inerrant word of God; 2) the belief in the divinity of Christ; 3) the belief in the efficacy of Christ's death, and physical resurrection for the salvation of the human soul" (Hunter, 1983, p. 7). All churches and traditions associated with the evangelical movement have in common a search for a "purer, simpler and more authentic form of religious truth . . . in other words to recover the spirit and truth of the apostolic age of Christianity" (p. 9). At the heart of this effort is the principle of *sola scriptura*, which asserts that the Bible is the absolute authority in matters of religious, spiritual, and moral truth (p.9).

Webber (1978, p. 26) concurred with Hunter and added that the historical evolution of the term evangelical is associated with certain theological and

doctrinal distinctives:

> The term evangelical has, through its historical development, acquired specific theological connotations. It first came into prominence with the reformers whose goal was to recover the gospel. Luther summarized these concerns in four terms: *sola gratia, sola fide, sola scriptura, and sola Christus* (grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone, Christ alone). These theological convictions were expanded, clarified and defined more clearly in the many confessions produced as a result of the Reformation– the most well known being the *Lutheran Augsburg Confession of 1530*, the *Anglican Thirty-nine Articles of 1563* and the *Westminster Confession of Faith of 1643.*

In the mid-19th century, Protestant evangelicals continued their efforts to preserve this orthodoxy in the nine articles of the Evangelical Alliance of 1846 (Webber, 1978, p. 26). More than 800 delegates representing more than fifty churches adopted these articles. They asserted:

> The divine inspiration, authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures; the right and duty of private judgment in the interpretation of them; the unity of the godhead and the trinity of persons; the depravity of human nature; the incarnation of the Son of God and His atonement for the sins of others; the justification of sinners by faith alone; the work of the Holy Spirit as sanctifier; the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and the final judgment by Jesus Christ; and the divine institution of the Christian ministry (Webber, 1978, p 26).

In the early 20th century, as the result of the modernist-fundamentalist

debate, conservative Protestants, again moved to clarify and preserve the essentials of the Christian faith. Five "fundamental" doctrines were insisted upon: "the verbal inspiration of the Bible; the virgin birth of Christ; His substitutionary atonement; His bodily resurrection; and His imminent and visible Second Coming" (Webber, 1978, p. 26). These "Fundamentals," and what later became know as Fundamentalism, represented a reaction to the influence of the modernist movement, the shift in scientific reasoning, and the advent of Darwinian socialism (Hunter, 1983, p. 32). In 1910, in an effort to regain a "cognitive grasp" of Protestantism, conservatives began the publication of a series of 12 volumes called the *Fundamentals*. The *Fundamentals* was designed to check the spread of modernism and the revisionist interpretation of scripture:

> They systematically covered doctrinal issues relating to the inerrancy of the Scriptures (the doctrine of inspiration, archaeological confirmation of biblical stories, and the refutation of higher criticism), other Christian doctrines (the existence of God, the historicity of Christ, the nature of the Holy Spirit, the personal premillenial return of Christ, the nature of the Christian life, etc.), and included commentary on the need for missions and evangelism and finally refutations of other religious systems (Hunter, 1983, p 32).

But is was not possible to stop the modernist takeover of the mainline churches:

> By 1919 . . . a bifurcation had emerged within American Protestantism. On the one hand there were the purported defenders of Protestant orthodoxy, now ignobly labeled Fundamentalists. On the other hand there were the Modernists, the advocates of the New Christianity and the new

> theology, who had initiated innovations in Protestant belief that were allegedly more attuned to the progressive spirit of the times (Hunter, 1983, p. 32).

Within this context the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) was formally constituted. While there was a glaring distinction between these New Evangelicals and the Fundamentalists in policy and approach (as previously cited in the review of the history of evangelicalism), there was complete unity between the NAE and the Fundamentalists pertaining to the fundamental tenets of Christian theology.

Adherence to these basic theological tenets persists to the present day. As stated earlier, there are four criteria believed to be central to contemporary "evangelical Christianity": 1) belief that salvation comes only through faith in Jesus Christ; 2) experience of conversion, that is, becoming "born again"; 3) belief that it is necessary to spread the gospel through missions and evangelism; and 4) belief in the truth or inerrancy of Scripture (Green, Guth, Smidt and Kellstedt 1996, p. 244). Garth Rosell (1996, p. 9) confirmed the pertinence of these criteria. He summarized the words of Harold Ockenga, one of the founders of the National Association of Evangelicals, and contends that evangelicals are united by "a common authority (the Bible), a common experience (conversion), a common conviction (that salvation is to be found only in the atoning work of Christ), and a common mission (worldwide evangelism)." And David Bebbington (1989, pp. 2-14) similarly noted four specific hallmarks of evangelicalism: "*conversionism,* the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross."

Thus, it seems that at the core of evangelical Christian thought are four basic theological dimensions. These dimensions address: 1) what one believes about the Bible; 2) what one believes about salvation; 3) what one believes about Jesus Christ, and 4) what one believes about proselytizing or evangelism.

*Social implications*

Evangelicalism is more than a historic movement focusing on theological beliefs, however. It is a movement of social distinctives as well. Hunter summarized this social component of the evangelical subculture: "Nineteenth-century Protestant orthodoxy, or Evangelicalism, was not just one religious worldview among many . . . its ethical and interpretive system . . . was unquestionably predominant, not only in religious life but in the broader culture" (Hunter, 1983, p. 24). A distinct element of the evangelical worldview was the "Protestant ethical orientation expressed in ascetic self-discipline (chastity, temperance, and the like), frugality, industry, pragmatism and so on" (Hunter, 1983, p 24). Next to the importance of "being saved" was the quest to conform to a rigorous private-sphere morality exclusively oriented around avoiding the sins of worldly amusements: playing cards, dancing, gambling, drinking, going to the movies, and swimming with members of the opposite sex (Hunter, 1983, p. 40). According to Green, Guth, Smidt and Kellstedt this conservative social posture continues within the rank and file of today's evangelical population. They identified "pornography, teaching of evolution in public schools, capital punishment, abortion, gay rights, sex education and support for traditional morality" as salient issues on which conservative evangelicals hold strong views and positions (Green, et al., 1996, p. 75).

Guth (Green, et al., 1996, p. 22) further discussed these "trigger issues" and the relevance they have to contemporary evangelical Christian colleges. He argued:

> [These] trigger issues [will not] vanish. Not only does the government continue to affront believers' sensibilities on issues such as abortion, pornography, school prayer, and gay rights, but it intrudes more and more upon the institutionalized inculcators of those values--schools and churches. As a result, Christian colleges are expanding rapidly, providing higher education for the products of both private and public schools in an effort to offset or preclude the "liberalizing" effects of secular institutions.

Plantinga and Holmes summarized the manner in which these "trigger issues" have historically influenced the "evangelical Christian" college and its social and moral posture. Holmes contended:

> Since yielding to the flesh and to wayward living are definite dangers for students in a Christian college, discipline is called for . . . Christian students generally are not eager to be exposed to the pressures of situations in which anything goes . . . A Christian college cannot tolerate open, persistent immorality and waywardness on the part of its students--or its faculty members, for that matter" (1975, pp. 84-85).

Plantinga (1980, p. 85) added:

> Every institution has [rules] and necessarily so for its orderly and effective operation, and for the safeguarding of individual interests . . . The primary purpose of a Christian college is not to insulate and protect students, but to educate them as responsible Christians . . . .The question about college regulations and their application is, How do they contribute to this?

While these statements do not refer explicitly to specific social standards or codes of conduct, it can be argued that implicit in their reference to "wayward living and immorality, discipline and rules" is a supportive acknowledgment of the social themes that have been historically associated with conservative Protestantism and evangelical Christianity.

*Summary*

In spite of the difficulty in securing a "tight" definition of evangelical Christianity, there seems to be evidence of some enduring theological and social themes associated with conservative Protestant believers. The theological issues are: 1) belief that salvation comes only through faith in Jesus Christ; 2) experience of conversion, that is, becoming "born again"; 3) belief that it is necessary to spread the gospel through missions and evangelism; and 4) belief in the truth or inerrancy of scripture (Green, et al., 1996, p. 244). The list of potentially relevant social issues includes chastity, temperance, frugality, traditional morality, and the avoidance of social dancing, gambling, drinking, smoking, and pornography (Hunter, 1983, p. 24). Also included on this list are the issues of abortion, gay rights, and human sexuality (Green, et al., 1996, p. 22).

While there does not appear to be unity among conservative Protestants and their respective personal convictions regarding these theological and social themes, the repeated referencing of these issues highlights their salience and potential volatility (Hunter, 1983; Green, et al., 1996; Plantinga, 1980; Holmes, 1975; Kantzer, 1996). Individuals attracted to an "evangelical Christian" college have likely been exposed to a vigorous debate surrounding these issues. Their

respective understandings of "evangelical Christian" college likely reflects their theological and social convictions in these broad thematic areas.

## Evangelical Higher Education

This section will serve to clarify and describe the subculture of contemporary evangelical higher education. More specifically, focus will be given to the evolution of American higher education from the religious to the utilitarian, and the subsequent role and response of the Protestant church and the evangelical movement.

### *Religious/Utilitarian Emphasis*

Historically, higher education in the United States, from its inception during the Puritan era to approximately the time of the Civil War, was established and operated within the context of a Christian ethos (Ringenberg, 1984, pp. 3-9). The guiding philosophy of most higher education until the end of the 19th century was "to propagate knowledge and to prepare upright leadership within a Christian society" (Hunter, 1987, p. 166). The mission of the academy during this time was not so much the advancement of scientific development but rather the promotion of moral development and civic responsibility. Professors were devoted teachers and role models, and courses in moral philosophy often served as the culmination of the college curriculum (Ringenberg, 1984, pp. 3-9; Noll, 1979, p. 7). The purpose of the academy was to "confirm the traditional Protestant cosmology: the existence of God and his relationship with the world and with mankind" (Hunter, 1987, p. 166).

> Theoretically and ideally, higher education [played] an important role in the maintenance of the moral order of orthodox Protestantism. When under the auspices of devoted believers, it [had] the purpose of galvanizing the commitment of its future leaders . . . and a sizable portion of its rank and file membership. It [had] the potential of making the faithful better equipped to handle the challenges of defending the faith from error and extending the influence and witness of the faith in the larger world" (Hunter, 1987, p. 165).

In the later half of the 19th century, however, changes occurred that would make the old style college scarcely recognizable as it was subsumed by the new. The industrial revolution and its corresponding benefactors, along with the burgeoning involvement of federal government, brought to bare new financial and community influences. For the industrialist and the politician, scientific advancement and its promise for greater productivity became the driving force for education. As the result, millions of dollars were made available for the establishment and/or expansion of colleges during this period. This infusion of capital, however, brought with it a different focus and intent. Practical knowledge and scientific acumen were viewed as priorities for the growing industrial society. "The German model, which emphasized self-directed, specialized, and advanced scholarship in a milieu where there would be total intellectual freedom from curricular limitations and doctrinal directives" was viewed with much respect (Hunter, 1987, p. 167). "Prominent businessmen replaced ministers and denominational bureaucrats as college trustees" and "where previously orthodoxy had been the major test of an academic's eligibility for a college

position, the emphasis was now almost solely on the academic's competence and credentials" (Hunter, 1987, p.167).

According to Geiger (1992, p. 18), this period represented the fulcrum of the evolution of American higher education. Predominant conceptions of higher education became overwhelmingly utilitarian as opposed to religious. Several educational institutions were created to address the burgeoning scientific, industrial and social needs of a growing American society. The Hatch and Morrill Land Grant Act created government-subsidized agricultural colleges. The livelihood and prestige of many private and public institutions was greatly enhanced by the generous philanthropy of individual donors. Some of these gifts were made to assist in filling regional needs for education in a growing nation, and some were made to encourage existing institutions to expand their services beyond traditionally religious roles and toward more scientific, social and utilitarian purposes. Examples of benefactors with such goals are Matthew Vassar, Henry Wells, Sophia Smith, and Henry Durant, who all gave substantial sums for the creation of colleges for women. Ezra Cornell and John Purdue made land-grant colleges far more effective with their gifts. And major gifts actually established research institutions such as Johns Hopkins, Stanford, and the University of Chicago.

Thus, today's paradigmatic university evolved as the country's paramount institution. Charles Elliot, president of Harvard in 1869, is perhaps the best example of the leadership indicative of this shift in educational philosophy. He instituted the elective system to replace the recitations and the classical curriculum. He replaced the practitioner-teacher with learned, full-time faculty.

He implemented a mandatory curriculum and eventually defined professional education as requiring a bachelor's degree. The most vigorous state universities adopted this same model, and the next generation of educators witnessed the formalization of this new paradigm as the canonized version of American higher education (Geiger, 1992, p. 19). By 1908 it was possible to delineate the "standard American university." This university admitted only high school graduates, provided students with two years of general education and then two years of advanced or specialized courses, and offered doctoral training in at least five departments, appropriately lead by Ph.D.'s. It was philosophically and pedagogically committed to objective, naturalistic inquiry that was detached from any denominational or religious restraints. This became a standard for the rest of higher education and defined the academy and the academic profession.

With the establishment of this new paradigm came the separation of colleges and universities from their founding churches. The propagation of moral priorities grounded in religious faith, which was the paramount goal of the "old college," became obsolete. The academy was no longer intentionally Christian in its philosophy and goals. Detached, objective and empirical study now served as the driving force, vision, and purpose of higher learning (Hunter, 1987, p. 166). The result of this transformation was a relatively abrupt secularization of the academy. Many colleges and universities that were founded as Christian institutions became nonsectarian, at least in part, to take advantage of the financial resources available from industrialists, government and private foundations (Hofstadter, 1970, p. 279).

*The Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy*

Another phenomenon that paralleled, and perhaps was even a by-product of this move away from an overtly Christian ideology, was the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy. According to Noll (1996, p. 19), "few historical events have been more important for the evangelical mind than the reorganization of American colleges at the end of the nineteenth century." As the academy embraced "new money, social Darwinism, and naturalistic science, the old synthesis of evangelical convictions and the American ideals stood almost no chance." The result was a reactionary and defensive posture on the part of the conservative Protestant community. With naturalistic or secular ideas now established as the leading guides of the university, the fundamentalist's tendency was to attack learning in general as a preserve of evil (Noll, 1996, p. 22). The result was "wholesale adoption of the anti-intellectual convictions" by conservative Protestants and the "complete abandonment of even the effort to develop a distinctly Christian mind."

It is in this context (the modernization of higher education and the respective fundamentalist response to this evolving secularization) that many of today's "evangelical Christian" colleges were established. It was in response to this movement that in the latter part of the 19th century "new institutes and colleges were founded to carry on the traditions being abandoned by others" (Hunter, 1987, p. 168). The turmoil surrounding higher education's move to the Germanic model and the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy served as the backdrop for the very inception of many of the colleges and universities that today claim to be "evangelical Christian." While these institutions were

conceived as defenders of conservative Protestant traditions (Hunter, 1987, p. 168), they were also influenced by the New Evangelical movement and its respect for honest intellectual rigor. This New Evangelicalism represented a move away from the reactionary and defensive posture of Fundamentalism:

> As the fundamentalists became increasingly dogmatic, doctrinaire, dispensational, and separatist, conservative evangelicals . . . distanced themselves from the fundamentalists. Between 1900 and 1940 these individuals and groups sought to find an appropriate position between liberalism and fundamentalism in a wide variety of separate ways. It was not until the 1940's that they began to identify as a larger, more cohesive grouping--a grouping once again using the term evangelical . . . By the last quarter of the twentieth-century, evangelicalism again became the predominant term used to describe those conservative Christians who believe in the [basic fundamentals of the faith]" (Zimmerman, 1996, p. 68; see pages 21-24 for a description of the New Evangelical).

Evangelical Christian higher education was thus spawned by two sociological and religious developments that were at the same time complementary yet conflicting. Evangelical Christian colleges found themselves balancing between a defensive posture of contending for the traditions of conservative Protestantism (which may have been the very reason for the college's initial founding) and the New Evangelicals call for the integration of faith and learning in an intellectually honest manner.

*Evangelical Colleges*

Today, evangelical Christian colleges distinguish themselves as "Christ-Centered" institutions (Longman, 1996, p. 1) that are "committed by charter to the integration of Christian faith and the academic disciplines of learning . . . Within a larger secular society, these institutions labor to keep the heritage of conservative Protestantism intact and to extend its sphere of influence in the larger world" through interaction, dialog and candid inquiry (Hunter, 1987, p. 168). Evangelical Christian colleges continue to emphasize and defend conservative Biblical faith with the goal of enlightening faith with truth and truth with faith:

> [A Christian college should] cultivate the creative and active integration of faith and learning, of faith and culture. This is its unique task in higher education today. While the reality is often more like an interaction of faith and learning, a dialog, than a completely ideal integration, it must under no circumstances become a disjunction between piety and scholarship, faith and reason, religion and science, Christianity and the arts, theology and philosophy, or whatever the differing points of reference may be. The Christian college will not settle for a militant polemic against secular learning and science and culture, as if there were a great gulf fixed between the secular and the sacred. All truth is God's truth, no matter where it is found, and we can thank Him for it all (Holmes, 1975, pp. 6-7).

*Summary*

The heritage of higher education in the United States includes a strong

relationship between the church and colleges and universities. From the mid-17th century to the post-Civil War era, American higher education was dominated by a Christian worldview. "Clergymen were the leading representatives of the intellectual class . . . and the denominations, which they represented, took the lead in founding colleges and instructing students" (Ringenberg, 1984, p. 37). The goal of American higher education during its first two hundred years was "to propagate knowledge and to prepare upright leadership within a Christian society" (Hunter, 1987, p. 166). The mission of the academy during this time was not so much the advancement of scientific development, but rather the promotion of moral development and civic responsibility. "Regardless of the vocation for which the student was preparing, the colonial college sought to provide [the student] an education that was distinctly Christian" (Ringenberg, 1984, p. 38). Examples of this intent are seen in the early mission statements of Harvard and Yale, for they claim, respectively, that the goal of learning was "to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life and therefore to lay Christ at the bottom as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning" and "to know God in Jesus Christ and answerably to lead a Godly, sober life" (Ringenberg, 1984, p. 38). The later 19th century brought the industrial revolution, social Darwinism, the prospect for social engineering, and the advent of modernism and naturalistic inquiry. These influences together led to the transformation of the American college and university. Conservative Protestants (evangelicals) no longer dominated college life (Noll, 1996, pp. 19-20).

As the result of the academy's move away from traditional Christian

ideals, conservative Protestants reacted defensively with a reaffirmation of the historical traditions and orthodox beliefs of Protestant Christianity and an attack on contemporary scholarship as the "preserve of evil" (Noll, 1996, p. 20). This movement became known as Fundamentalism and its adherents, Fundamentalists. Many Christian colleges were established during this time as a response to the academy's move away from the basic "fundamentals" of biblical Christianity (Hunter, 1987, p. 168).

Working to confront what they believed to be an anti-intellectual and defensive posture of the Fundamentalists, the New Evangelicals established themselves during the early years of the 20th century. These evangelicals sought to respect the Bible and its respective truth but did so through a more "conciliatory attitude of cooperation without compromise" (Hunter, 1983, p. 41). They were generally supportive of the efforts of the Fundamentalists to "break with apostasy" but went to great lengths to declare that they would not be associated with or known as a "reactionary, negative, or destructive type of organization" (Hunter, 1983, p. 41). This debate between the Fundamentalists and the New Evangelicals, together with the movement of the American academy away from the church, served as the backdrop for the establishment of what became known as "evangelical Christian" colleges. These colleges declared themselves to be Christ-centered liberal arts institutions of higher education (Longman, 1996, p. 1) that were "committed to doctrinal purity and the traditions of orthodox faith while at the same time engaging society in the pursuit of knowledge and truth as something to be cherished and sought after not feared" (Hunter, 1983, p. 44). This juxtaposition of being proclaimed defenders

of the faith while at the same time being committed to honest and rigorous intellectual engagement persists as the standard for "evangelical Christian" higher education.

## Spring Arbor College: An Evangelical Institution

"Spring Arbor, an evangelical Christian college affiliated with the Free Methodist Church, is committed to excel in the liberal arts, professional, and graduate studies. Through the influence of an affirming academic community where a faculty of Christian scholars integrates faith with experiential learning, students develop intellectually, grow as persons, and are challenged by the call to vibrant Christian service" (Spring Arbor College, 1999, p.1-5).

What is unique about Spring Arbor College, is its heritage and its core distinctives? These questions are examined by considering Spring Arbor's historical roots and by looking at the language used in recent mission statements and other defining documents. This section will be structured in five parts. First, the origins of Free Methodism will be reviewed. Second, attention will be given to the historical Free Methodist perspective of education. Third, there will be a summary pertaining to the founding of Spring Arbor Seminary. Fourth, the Holiness Movement and its influence on the distinctive nature of Spring Arbor College will be described and critiqued. And finally, the transition into the 20th century and the impact of the Depression years on the college will be reviewed and the transition of Spring Arbor from junior college to four-year college status will be summarized.

*Free Methodism*

Benjamin Titus Roberts, the founder of the Free Methodist Church, was born in 1823 in upstate western New York to a family of exceptionally modest means (Zahniser, 1957, p. 11). Little is known of his childhood years, but there is evidence of his early exposure to education and his affinity and respect for the same. As a young teenager he not only pursued his formal education in a local country school but also studied algebra and Latin on his own. He began his teaching career at the age of sixteen, and at nineteen moved to Little Falls, New York, to pursue the study of law (Zahnizer, 1957, p. 13). His conversion to Christianity at the age of twenty-one led him to leave his law studies and attend Lima Seminary to prepare for college entrance and, in turn, for ministry as a career (Zhaniser, p. 15).

In 1845, Roberts enrolled at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, where three years later he graduated with honors in "metaphysical oration." He also received one of only five scholarships awarded by the university, and attained membership in Phi Beta Kappa (Zahniser, 1957, p. 27). Before leaving Wesleyan University, Roberts was offered the presidency of Wyoming Seminary in Kingston, Pennsylvania, but declined this appointment to instead pursue the Methodist itinerant ministry (Zahnizer, 1957, p. 28).

In 1860, Roberts organized and founded the Free Methodist Church as a reaction to the issues of slavery and service to the poor. The new church was to remain loyal to the doctrines of Methodism but officially take a stand against slavery and in support of the underprivileged. The word "Free" identified this new Methodist church as one that believed in freedom for all, regardless of race,

and free access to the church (i.e., no selling of seating for services) regardless of financial means (Zahniser, 1957, pp. 65-66). The emphasis on the "methods" of holy living and piety espoused by the Methodist church, honed by an avowed defense of the slaves and the poor, reflected Roberts' commitment to meet the needs of the common man and woman.

*Free Methodism and Education*

Roberts' believed education to be the "handmaid of religion" and that a "truly pious people" would be "an intelligent people." Citing the fact that one of the first acts of the Pilgrim fathers was to found an institution of learning, Roberts expressed his belief that education and religion work together for the betterment of the people they both serve: "While we cannot prize too highly the benefits of mental culture we must not lose sight of that moral and religious culture which lies at the foundation to correct principles and good character" (Zahniser, 1957, pp. 230-231). This may distinguish Roberts and his philosophy of education from other religious leaders of the day. While he did hold as paramount the promotion of "vital piety," "the Bible standard," and the "Gospel," Roberts expressed his resolution that the youth he served needed a "scientific and literary education . . . joined with a definite religious teaching." He did not believe in a dichotomy between the secular and the religious pursuit of knowledge. Ignorance, he maintained, was the "mother of superstition and religious error" (Zahniser, 1957, p. 231). The teacher, he thought, should labor to show the harmony between science and religion, "between the discoveries of one and the doctrines of the other."

Roberts founded Chesbrough Seminary in 1866 to further his vision of education (Zahniser 1957, pp. 234-240). His desire to integrate faith and learning is reflected in the words of Theodore Roosevelt, which were included in a 1930 publication of Chesbrough Seminary:

> We must cultivate the mind, but it is not enough only to cultivate the mind. With education of the mind must go the spiritual teaching, which will make us turn the trained intellect to good account. Education must be education of the heart and conscience no less than the mind (Zahniser, 1957, p. 230).

Roberts' commitment to a specific purpose and direction within this context of integration is seen in his contention that "for years the conviction has rested upon us that there ought to be a school under more decidedly religious influences than most with which we are aquatinted . . . one where a practical and thorough education can be gained, without the hindrances to piety found in most fashionable schools of our land." Spurred on by Roberts' passion and commitment to education, Free Methodism was, from the onset, seen as a dedicated pursuit of truth and knowledge within the context of Christian faith, corresponding behaviors and personal piety (Zahniser, 1957, p. 231).

*Founding of Spring Arbor Seminary*

In 1863, at the urging of B. T. Roberts, a man named Edward Payson Hart left Merengo, Illinois, with the goal of extending Free Methodism to Michigan (Snyder, 1973, p. 7). In keeping with Roberts' vision to make education available to all who had the desire to learn, E. P. Hart immediately began investigating the

possibility of starting a school dedicated to the ideals he shared with Roberts, that is, the perpetuation of faith and learning. In 1873, Spring Arbor Seminary was founded. Corresponding documents indicate the following priorities associated with the birth of the institution:

- The school was to provide general liberal arts education of high academic quality. It was not intended to be a theological school, but was intended to prepare Christian youth in general to lead constructive lives in society.
- The school was intended primarily to provide education for the children of Free Methodist families but was to be open to non-Free Methodists: "No student shall be deprived of any of the advantages of said school, or be in any manner proscribed while attending the same on account of his religious convictions or belief."
- The Christian faith, and specifically the Bible, was to provide the controlling perspective in the educational program of the school.
- The school was intended to provide and maintain an environment conducive to serious study and consistent Christian living as defined by the Free Methodist Church.
- The school was to be controlled by an independent board and only loosely affiliated with the Free Methodist denomination (Snyder, 1973, p.17-18).

*The Holiness Movement*

Spring Arbor Seminary was founded at a time when evangelical Christianity was concerned with both perfectionism and social reform (Snyder, 1973, p. 21). The Holiness Movement was picking up momentum and spreading

throughout the nation. By the later part of the 19th century the Holiness Movement had spread within the ranks of Methodism and other denominations and produced at least 23 new denominations. This movement was a "religious revolt which paralleled the political and economic revolt of populism" (Snyder, 1973, p. 21). Emphasis on the "methods" of holiness and the expectations for corresponding conformity in belief and practice influenced Free Methodism and, in turn, reached Spring Arbor. The school's developing identity clearly reflected the evangelical call for "holiness" in faith and lifestyle. A statement from the 1878-79 school catalog indicated:

> We desire to offer young persons the opportunity to secure a good, practical education, combined with careful discipline in habits of order, neatness, and prompt obedience to proper authority, as well as due respect for all; and we shall especially endeavor to exhibit the power of Christianity, by precept and godly example (Snyder, 1973, p. 23).

School rules at this time included required chapel and church attendance, and prohibitions on firearms, tobacco, and profanity (Snyder, 1973, p. 23).

*Entering the 20th Century*

The controlling philosophy of education at Spring Arbor Seminary through the early 1900s was " a continuation of the original intentions of the founders. More than this, the long shadow of B.T. Roberts can be detected here, for the emphasis on high quality [Christian] liberal education traces back to him directly" (Snyder, 1973, p. 45). David S. Warner, who was president of Spring Arbor Seminary from 1893-1905, clarified the institution's basic convictions at the onset

of the 20th century:

> An educational split possessed the founders of our church. They saw and felt the necessity of schools in which the spiritual life which they enjoyed would be carefully fostered, and young people could be trained intellectually under the influences most conducive to holiness (Snyder, 1973, p. 44).

Warner further summarized this commitment to education within the context of holiness and the evangelical faith:

> The aim is, through instruction in secular subjects, acquaintance with moral principles and the Scriptures, and the bringing of such influence to bear upon the young as may lead them to salvation and strengthen them in the name of Christ (Snyder, 1973, p. 44).

Spring Arbor's commitment to integrating faith and learning is also evident in Warner's comment:

> If there are reasons why young people should remain ignorant and uncultured, we have failed to discover them, while on the other hand every consideration urges them to make the very most of themselves for others by cultivation and education, and that, too, in connection with a heart humble, trusting and fully dedicated to God and his service (Snyder, 1973, p.44).

B. J. Vincent, H. A. Millican and H. S. Stewart, who were presidents of Spring Arbor from 1905-1923, confirmed the institution's commitments and distinctive core values as espoused by Warner. Vincent described it this way:

> The element of spiritual religion entering into our educational work is what

differentiates our school from others . . . The success of our school . . . will depend upon giving due prominence, in the future and in the past, to the cultivation of the principles of vital godliness (Snyder, 1973, p. 54).

In 1909 Millican added, "To urge holiness of life and thorough Christian training, together with the highest of mental culture is, as the best preparation for life is, our highest aim" (Snyder, 1973, p. 54). And H. S. Stewart, in 1923, restated this commitment:

> No process of education is worthwhile which is not founded on Christ and the Bible. Yea, Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone of any true system of education. He is the embodiment of Truth . . . True science, morality and religion have their Alpha and Omega in Jesus Christ . . . Positively Christian education then demands first of all the Bible as the foundation of all treaties on science, morals, and religion . . . It is the message from the author of all science to his creatures (Snyder, 1973, p. 54).

The continuity of ideals and values espoused in these statements represents a common thread of commitment to Spring Arbor's mission as an institution that stands for "quality in the liberal arts; for the priority of Christian standards and a Christian perspective based on Christ and the Bible." Also clear is the "increasingly self-conscious attempt to define such education in the face of the pressure of social forces that were ever more pervasive and perceived as distinctly non-Christian" (Snyder, 1973, p. 55).

*The Depression Years*

The Depression years were a time of tremendous challenge and change

for Spring Arbor. Merlin Smith, president from 1926-1934, not only shepherded the school through financial crisis, but also set the stage for the Seminary to become a junior college. In spite of the financial pressures and the challenges associated with becoming an institution of higher learning, Spring Arbor's commitment to its core values as an evangelical Christian institution remained clear. The following is Smith's interpretation of the basic thrust behind Spring Arbor:

> The program of Christian education is not one which is merely adding to the current scholastic curriculum a course in Bible study and instruction in a set of moral standards which have been set by church creeds. Its more direct concern is that all truth, in whatever field it may be found, shall become part of the individual student's thought and life concept. This attitude toward truth makes the truth permeate every principle which motivates the student's life. Such incarnation of truth into the life's activities can only be made through constant association with those who have experienced such incarnation. Christian teachers are the only ones who can make education Christian (Snyder, 1973, p. 70).

Smith's statement is an affirmation of the commitment to Jesus Christ as the standard of all truth and the call to integrate faith and learning within this context. Such a statement was obviously in harmony with the guiding philosophy of Spring Arbor. There may, however, be an additional emphasis, one that results from the blending of two long held priorities: a quality liberal arts education and a controlled Christian environment. Smith emphasizes the role of faculty mentors and their "constant association" with the students as being the

only way to "make education Christian." To Smith, it was clear that the teachers and administrators employed at Spring Arbor had a mandate to model all that Spring Arbor espoused in its mission, purpose and policies.

*Spring Arbor Junior College*

Setting the stage for Spring Arbor's junior college years, President Leroy Lowell defined Christian education around three words: belief, character and experience. Speaking first of belief, Lowell said:

> Our belief about things is our philosophy concerning the world in which we live. If God and Christ are left out of our world, we are not using all of the facts. No philosophy of life is adequate which does not account for all the facts. And so true education must be Christian in content. It must be more than a religious flavor or even a religious emphasis--it must be Christ-centered. Jesus Christ is still the Way the Truth and the Life . . . A second word is character . . . What is the chief end of education . . . It seems to me that there can only be one answer--character. How essential, then, is the education of the heart and conscience as well as the mind! Learning is a good and useful thing, but learning is beneficial only when love advances with knowledge. Increase in power is safe only when it is matched with high ideals . . . There is another word if our picture is to be complete. It is experience . . . It may be questioned whether we are still in the realm of approved educational procedure when we insist that the claims of Jesus Christ upon the individual life be considered. The answer must certainly be in the affirmative. Experience is the method of

> modern science. "Whether things can be known or not," said Bacon, "cannot be determined by arguing, but by trying." Our trouble is not that we shall become unscientific through this approach to life, but that we shall not be sufficiently scientific. Paraphrasing the words just quoted: "Whether Jesus Christ can be known for a certainty or not cannot be determined by arguing, but by trying (Snyder, 1973, p. 103).

Howard Snyder summarized Lowell's words by stating:

> The guiding concepts here are that Christian education must be pervaded by a Christian perspective, that there must be an openness to all truth, and that Christian education aims for the education of "heart and conscience" as well as mind. There is specific commitment here also to the person of Jesus Christ and the truths of the Bible" (1973, p. 104).

James Gregory, who succeeded Lowell as President in 1944, commented on the priorities that he considered to be paramount to effective pursuit of Christian Education: "It is in Christian schools that the most effective work is being done for the Kingdom of God . . .The influence of a Christian faculty is eternal in its reach. Reverence for the Bible and a serious study of its teachings are educational aims in the Christian college. The force of this training can hardly be exaggerated as a power for good" (Snyder, 1973, p. 105). Again there is an adherence to the idea that the ongoing mission of this institution is based on commitment to its Christian heritage and ideals. A faculty that claims allegiance to the same ideals and cause is integral to the effective pursuit of this purpose.

*A Four Year College*

In the late 1950s Spring Arbor Junior College began to discuss and investigate the merits of becoming a four-year institution, and in 1958 a self-study was initiated to review the College's historical distinctives and guiding philosophy (Snyder, 1973, pp. 110-112). The self-study report included the following:

> Spring Arbor Junior College is an educational institution of the Free Methodist Church and wholly supports the fundamental beliefs, principles and emphases of the church it represents.

On October 7, 1959, the College's Board of Trustees voted to commit the College to the development of a four-year liberal arts program. The following guidelines demonstrated the Board's priorities:

- The Christ-centered philosophy of the school would remain basic to all other considerations and the primary purpose of the college would be to serve Free Methodist youth.
- Curriculum development in the liberal arts would be the dominant principle.
- The student base would be broadened to recruit and attract those in other evangelical denominations in the state and region (Snyder, 1973, pp. 113-114).

The College expounded on these priorities and the rationale for its proposed four-year status in a progress report issued to the North Central Association in November 1962. Of particular note is the fact that Spring Arbor cited the following factor to justify its proposal:

> A second factor which [is] internal in nature but external in implication [is]

> the evidence that the State of Michigan [needs] another evangelical Christian college. A survey of Michigan students in evangelical Christian colleges in the surrounding states [shows] that the second largest source for the student population following the home state [is] Michigan (Snyder, 1973, p.115).

Again, Spring Arbor not only reaffirmed its evangelical heritage and identity but also used it as a positive distinction as it argued for accreditation with North Central. Spring Arbor also indicated that it considered its primary constituency to be the evangelical population, placing itself in the same general competitive market as other regional evangelical Christian colleges.

The college's new president, David McKenna, presided over the development of a new statement of purpose that was penned in 1962:

> Spring Arbor College is an evangelical Christian College. It is a college because the faculty and students are actively involved in the quest for knowledge in the major fields of human learning. It is a Christian college because the life of learning among the faculty and students is ever held within the perspective of their commitment to the redemptive love of Jesus Christ. It is an evangelical Christian college because the learning and love of the faculty and students is aligned with the responsibility of the Christian to be an effective witness in his chosen vocation and a critical participant in his society. Within the framework of this purpose Spring Arbor College can best provide the Free Methodist church with the leadership of intelligent and responsible evangelical Christian young people (Snyder, 1973, pp. 120-121).

This statement, which set the foundation for Spring Arbor to officially become a four-year institution in 1963, emphasized the aspect of a community of faculty and students dedicated to the same ideal of an evangelical Christian college and led to a more succinct statement of purpose that today is known as The Spring Arbor Concept:

> Spring Arbor College is a community of learners distinguished by our lifelong involvement in the study and application of the liberal arts, total commitment to Jesus Christ as our perspective for learning, and critical participation in the contemporary world (Spring Arbor College, 1999).

In the spring 1997 issue of the *Spring Arbor College Journal*, President James Chapman voiced his commitment to the history, traditions, and common faith he believed to be central to Spring Arbor's long-standing purpose:

> A Christian education helps students eliminate other alternatives and in doing so eliminates confusion . . . Ultimately our history and our traditions, as followers of Jesus, bring focus and meaning to everything we do . . . On this we will not give up. We are tenacious. We are committed . . . Transcendental questions must be asked by professors who speak from their own commitment to the person and work of Jesus, professors who provide encouragement and counsel as students raise questions and confront doubts. It is simply unacceptable to raise issues and not to provide the support students need to think and act Christianity (Chapman, 1997, p. 4).

The Spring Arbor College Concept, combined with College catalog statements, has continued to reinforce language that specifically connects the

college to its evangelical Christian roots and to a constituency which chooses a college with such an understanding in mind.

*Summary*

It can be seen that Spring Arbor College has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to the evangelical community and the ideals espoused by it. From its inception in 1873 to the present, Spring Arbor College has consistently claimed its conservative Protestant heritage and "evangelical Christianity" as its primary distinctive. This commitment, however, coincides with the present day reality that the very words "evangelical Christian" may be unclear and subjectively defined. To understand Spring Arbor College--what it is, and what distinguishes it from other institutions--it is imperative to understand how the terminology "evangelical Christian" is understood, interpreted and applied by the various constituencies associated with the College.

## College Selection

This section will focus on the issue of college selection. Why do people choose a given college, and who is involved in the decision? First, parental influence will be reviewed. Second, the issue of student choice will be summarized. Finally, the issue of "consumer" expectations will serve as the conclusion.

*Parental influence*

Are parents influential in the choice of an "evangelical Christian" college?

Through the use of the ACT Alumni Survey, where 172 colleges and universities throughout the United States participated and over 77,000 alumni responded, Moss and Cockriel (1990, p. 10-11) identified parental influence as one of the two primary reasons leading to Christian college selection. Helen Reynolds (1981, p. 27) went further and stated, "In the broadest sense college selection can be viewed as a partnership of choice in which the parent and the child must negotiate an agreement." Parents are involved in the process early on and most likely exercise their greatest level of influence during the consideration of the "choice set" of colleges (Hossler and Gallagher, 1987, pp. 207-221). Furthermore, most parents reserve the right of "veto power" over the final selection of a college (Murphy, 1981, pp. 140-150; Reynolds, 1981, p. 26-28). There is also evidence to suggest that students who attend Christian colleges do so because of the opinions and corresponding influence of parents and other influential relatives and that parents exercise influence over their children's choice of a college either because of their own personal experience at a Christian college or because of an affinity to a sponsoring denomination (Kellaris and Kellaris, 1988; MacDermott, Conn, and Owen 1987; Riesman, 1980).

With the research indicating that parents are influential in the college selection process, the next question is: Do parents bring with them specific expectations and assumptions concerning what a college will offer their children? Plantinga concluded that indeed they do. Parents choose colleges for their children because they believe a Christian college will aid in the perpetuation of their own basic beliefs, outlook and legacy:

Most parents are determined to pass on something of their own outlook

> and set of values to their children. There are certain things they hold very dear, and they try to show their children why whenever an opportunity presents itself. Parents see their own outlook and basic beliefs as a legacy to be treasured by their children . . . The Christian educational institution, likewise has a legacy to pass on to the students entrusted to its care. A Christian college offers instruction . . . [and] decides on certain essentials which it holds before all students . . . Among these essentials are the basic elements of the Christian outlook" (Plantinga, 1980, p. 43).

Plantinga said that in choosing an "evangelical Christian" institution, parents believe they are selecting a college that will encourage their children to assimilate shared values, goals and commitments. Holmes agreed and also argued that parents prefer Christian colleges not only because of the values they hold for the nuclear family but also because of the perceived influence the college will have on the "oneness" of Christian community: "The unifying influence of a shared experience in a Christian college can further have a stabilizing influence on a Christian community . . . Any Christian community that relies on a variety of secular institutions to supply its educational needs is apt to drift and gradually lose its cohesion . . . [and] the oneness of purpose that ought to come to expression in Christian endeavors in many sectors of life" (Holmes, 1975, p. 80).

*Student Selection*

In reviewing the literature pertaining to why students choose specific colleges, it is impossible to ignore the impact of parents. On one side of the

coin, perceptions influence the choice of the college their children will attend. On the other side of the coin, the focus is on the student and his/her perspective. The literature is replete, however, with evidence that students indeed do make choices that reflect their parent's values and opinions. The result of a Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching survey supported this conclusion. This survey showed that when students were asked who or what was the most influential source in helping with the selection of a college, they cited parents with the most frequency: The Carnegie Foundation summarized this research by pointing out that "Clearly, parents are crucial partners in the selection process and colleges that want to communicate effectively with prospective students should also consider ways to communicate effectively with parents" (How Do Students Choose a College, 1986, p. 32). Wanat and Bowles (1992, pp. 23-29) contended that the majority of the students indicate that in making the final decision on what college to attend they seek "support, advice, and direction from families." The research of Sevier (1996, p. 3) is a pointed summary on the interactive nature of student choice and parental influence. To the rhetorical question, "Who helps students choose which college to attend?", they respond: "For all students of all types, the answer is parents. This is more true for students planning to attend a Christian college."

Students indicate that two other factors which influence their choices of colleges are publications and image. The Carnegie Foundation survey, (1986, p. 30), revealed that when students were asked what sources of information they used in choosing a college, 95% said they used college publications and 37% said they considered this the most important source of information. Sevier

(1996, p. 3) posited that "Image is everything . . . more students choose a college because of its image and reputation than almost any other factor." Wanat and Bowles (1992, p. 27) discussed image and perceived benefit. They contended that students consider cost secondary to getting an education that is in keeping with a college's reputation and image. Here the student's primary concern is getting what he/she paid for. Sevier (1996, pp. 4-5) concluded by saying that colleges are obligated to be true to their claims and use publications to build an awareness of the "special advantages" associated with a specific "brand" of education. Of particular relevance to the Christian "brand" of education is the research of Kellaris and Kellaris (1988, pp. 187-197), which indicated that the denominational identity and "religious orientation" of a college was claimed by over 50% of the respondents as being influential in college selection.

*Consumer Perspective*

While parent and student selection of a college is based on certain perceptions and expectations, there is a reported lack of satisfaction with the facts and information available regarding college options (How do Students Choose a College, 1986, p. 30). While 95% of students and parents indicated they use college publications as an aid in selecting a college, these same publications were ranked lowest in terms of both relevance and accuracy. "Only 59 % of students and 49% of their parents rated the publications as accurate, and only 32% of the students and 34% of the parents considered the materials relevant to their needs." In confronting this issue, William Bennett, former

Secretary of Education, contended: "We are now beginning to see signs that the American people are demanding more consumer information, more truth in advertising from colleges and universities" (Bennett, 1994, p. 175). The academy is being called upon to communicate forthrightly with parents and prospective students and provide them with clear information and thereby honestly market their distinctiveness (Moss and Cockriel, 1990, p, 12). Arthur Holmes, in his seminal work *The Idea of a Christian College* (1975, p. 75), challenged the Christian college to accountability: "It is time that evangelical educators took the initiative in educating the evangelical public as to the nature of Christian higher education . . . The educator's speeches, sermons and articles as well as the college's advertisements and catalogs and brochures could expound more eloquently than they do the idea of a Christian college."

*Summary*

The literature indicates that parents and students work together in the process of selecting a college. Their perceptions and expectations interact as they seek out an educational product that provides "fit" (Eliot, 1965), order, correspondence and coherence (Parks, 1986). Perceptions of a college's social and academic atmosphere are leading factors in college selection. Parents and students choose Christian colleges because of institutional reputation, the college's relationship to a sponsoring denomination, and personal beliefs about what is going to be a safe and moral atmosphere (Moss and Cockriel, 1990, pp. 9-12).

At the same time, however, there is evidence that these "consumers" do not trust the reliability and accuracy of the claims made by colleges and universities. As a result, there is an increasing demand for "more consumer information and more truth in advertising" from the academy (Bennett, 1994, p. 75). Higher education is being called upon to communicate more clearly and accurately its market distinctives (Moss and Cockriel, 1990, pp. 9-12).

If the pursuit of "fit" and the perceptions that precede it do lead students and parents to choose one institution over another--If students and parents do look to the defining language of a college's publications but yet question its accuracy--then it is appropriate to seek a further understanding of what the college communicates and how consistent it is with what our "consumers" believe we are saying to them.

## Accreditation and Assessment

Assuming people choose one college over another because of the perception of fit, what obligation do we as educators have to model the values, and provide the direction implicitly and explicitly declared in our mission statements, promotional materials and other defining documents? This is clearly called for by accrediting agencies.

Criteria one for accreditation, as set forth by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) (North Central Association, 1994, p. 33), states that the institution must have "clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education" (NCA, 1994, p. 33). NCA goes further to indicate that a college's goals, resources, personnel,

marketing, governance, budgeting, and decision-making processes should all be a reflection of this mission and purpose. Colleges and universities are called to exercise "integrity in [their] practices and relationships" and to demonstrate they are "accomplishing [their] educational and other purposes" (p. 34, 35). In short, NCA tells the educational community it must do two things. First, it must tell its constituency who it is and what its mission and purposes are. Second, it must be faithful to these claims.

According to Scarafiotti and Helminski (1993, p. 85), "a college mission statement and its purposes carve out the unique approach in which the college serves its students. These statements explain the college's identity to the students and staff and describe why it is the choice of the students." The work of Pearce and Fred (1987) is noted:

> An effective mission statement defines the fundamental unique purpose that sets a business apart from other firms of its type and identifies the scope of the business' operation in product and market terms. It is an enduring statement of purpose that reveals an organization's product or service, markets, customers, and philosophy (as cited in Scarafiotti and Helminski, 1993).

Such defining language "gives the mission and purposes more meaning and helps the staff internalize the [college's] intent." It is a statement of "a preferred future, a desirable and ideal state. It is the deepest expression of what the institution wants, an expression of personal and collective aspirations. Focused on students, it expresses how the mission will be actualized . . . [it] implies a strategy, [and] states the standard" (Scarafiotti and Helminski, 1993, p. 86).

Astin (1993, p. 5) echoed this need to attend to mission and purpose with these rhetorical questions: "What specific policies and practices in higher education do we justify? What really matters to us? Where do we direct our attention, and to what ends do we direct our energies? What do we pay attention to? What, in other words, are the values that govern our efforts.?" Astin continued by discussing the issue of institutional reputation. He argued that reputational excellence is often based on the "folklore" perpetuated by public perceptions and beliefs. As a college's respective constituency observes "what really matters" to the college and "what values govern its efforts," public perceptions evolve into institutional reputations. "Folklore" becomes reality in the minds of the consumers (p. 6). Astin's basic premise is that an institution's assessment practices are a reflection of its values, and the values of an institution are revealed in what "it pays attention to" and in the "reputation" the college acquires as the public observes its governing values and practices.

*Summary*

The "evangelical Christian" college's obligation to assess institutional values, governing priorities and public perceptions is further motivated by: (1) The North Central Association's call for the validation of corporate integrity; (2) the reality that our mission and purpose serve both to explain the college's identity to the students and staff and to perpetuate certain expectations of who we are and what we will provide; and (3) the fact that reputation is a mirror image of what our constituency perceives our true priorities and governing values to be.

"The ideal vision statement implies a strategy, states the standard of

excellence, and is shared by everyone in the institution" (Scarafiotti and Helminski, 1993, p. 86). These statements must be more than mere words on paper. They must be a reflection of "integrity in [our] practices and relationships" and a demonstration that we are "accomplishing [our] educational and other purposes" (NCA, 1994, p. 33). Failing to be what we claim to be and what our public thinks we are "makes a mockery" of the very defining values we claim (Scarafiotti and Helminski, 1993, p. 86). Arthur Holmes summarized:

> Faulty expectations generate public relations problems and these add a needless burden to the problems of higher education today . . . we need to get back to the basics, to the underlying and central reason for existing at all. Otherwise the student and the college may both lapse in "bad faith" into the faceless anonymity of people and places without distinctive meaning and become mere statistics in the educational almanac" (Holmes, 1975, p. 4).

## Summary of Literature Review

The preceding literature review demonstrated that evangelical Christianity is a concept that is difficult to define and in need of further study: "Often stereotypes do have some grounding in truth, they are always to some degree a distortion . . . This has certainly been the case for Evangelicals and their movement . . . one reason for the wide dependence on caricatures in the discussions of Evangelicalism is the regrettable lack of social-scientific literature on the phenomenon, for research would undoubtedly clarify and qualify if not contradict our understandings" (Hunter, 1983, p. 3).

In spite of the difficulty in securing a "tight" definition of evangelical

Christianity, there is evidence of some enduring theological and social themes associated with this movement. While there does not appear to be a common opinion among conservative Protestants regarding these themes, there is abundant evidence of their salience and potential volatility (Hunter, 1983; Green, Guth and Smidt, and Kellstedt,1996; Plantinga, 1980; Holmes, 1975; Kantzer, 1996). Individuals attracted to an "evangelical Christian" college have likely been exposed to a vigorous debate surrounding these issues. Spring Arbor College's constituent understandings of "evangelical Christian" college could likely reflect the theological and social convictions in these broad thematic areas.

The Fundamentalist-Modernist debate and the evangelical response to it served as the backdrop for the establishment of what became known as "evangelical Christian" colleges. These colleges declared themselves to be Christ-centered liberal arts institutions of higher education (Longman, 1996, p. 1) that were "committed to doctrinal purity and the traditions of orthodox faith while at the same time engaging society in the pursuit of knowledge and truth as something to be cherished and sought after not feared" (Hunter, 1983, p. 41). This juxtaposition of being proclaimed defenders of the faith while at the same time being committed to honest and rigorous intellectual engagement persists as the standard for "evangelical Christian" higher education.

Spring Arbor College has specifically identified itself as an "evangelical Christian" college (Spring Arbor College, 1999, p. 8). The college has justified its charter as a four-year institution on the basis that it provides an evangelical product to an evangelical population, and it continues to the present day to use this language in its official documents (Snyder, 1973,p. 115).

Parents and students choose colleges based on the understanding they have of what that college is and how it matches their educational values (Moss, 1990; Plantinga, 1980; Holmes, 1975). Student choice is also influenced by perceptions and expectations pertaining to college climate and atmosphere. There is also an increasing tendency for parents and students to view themselves as "consumers" and make the corresponding demands for clear and accurate communication and the delivery of a product that they believe is consistent with what they were promised in the college's promotional material (Bennett, 1994; Moss, 1990; Holmes, 1975).

Colleges are obligated to assess their values and governing priorities, to exercise "integrity in [their] practices and relationships," and to demonstrate that they are "accomplishing [their] educational and other purposes" (NCA, 1994, 33). Failure to be what it claims to be (and what the public thinks it is), may cause the college and its constituency to "lapse in 'bad faith' into the faceless anonymity of people and places without distinctive meaning and become mere statistics in the educational almanac" (Holmes, 1975, p. 4).

These realities combine to make it imperative for colleges to thoroughly understand who they are and communicate this message clearly to their respective constituencies. Evangelical educators must take the initiative in educating the evangelical public as to the nature of Christian higher education. The educators' speeches, sermons and articles, as well as the college's advertisements and catalogues and brochures, should clarify the goals, purposes, methods and community ideas of what it means to be part of an "evangelical Christian" college.

# CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methods and procedures for collecting data for this study. The chapter is divided into the following sections: 1) statement of purpose; 2) methodology and rationale; 3) description of population and sample selection; 4) description of the instrument; 5) procedures for the collection of the data; 6) procedures for analysis; and 7) summary.

## Statement of Purpose

As stated earlier, Spring Arbor College is a four-year liberal arts institution, accredited by the North Central Association. The College is affiliated with the Free Methodist Church of North America and is a member of the Coalition for Christian Colleges & Universities. Furthermore, Spring Arbor College specifically makes claim to its distinction as an "evangelical Christian" college.

### *Research Questions*

The purpose of this study was to determine what the terminology "evangelical Christian" means when a college uses it as part of its definition. Using Spring Arbor College as a case example, the research question was as follows:

What does the distinction "evangelical Christian" mean to the College's relevant stakeholders? More specifically:

- What do the college's personnel (faculty, staff, administration, and board) understand "evangelical Christian" college to mean?
- What do the college's primary constituent groups (students, parents, pastors,

and alumni) understand "evangelical Christian" college to mean?

- What understandings exist among the college's relevant stakeholders regarding the meaning of "evangelical Christian" college?

*Research Problem*

The above questions were asked within the context of perceived definitional ambiguity regarding the meaning of "evangelical Christian" college. The assumption of this study was that students, parents, pastors and alumni who choose to affiliate with Spring Arbor College have a specific understanding of "evangelical Christian" college and what this terminology means socially and theologically, while the faculty, staff, administration and board members may or may not share the same definition.

## Methodology and Rationale

In addressing the above research questions, a qualitative/quantitative model is used to identifying salient themes and then to assess the relative weight of these themes (Creswell, 1994. p 177-190). The following is a rationale for choosing this method of inquiry. This rationale includes 1) a discussion of the paradigm within which this research will be conducted; 2) an explanation of the qualitative/quantitative model and its perceived appropriateness for this research; and 3) a description of the population and corresponding sample selection.

*Paradigm*

The first step in developing a methodological rationale is to identify the paradigm within which the research will be conducted (Creswell, 1994, p. , Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, pp. 163,164). A paradigm, as defined by Reese (1980, p. 352), is a system of ideas that "gives us some judgment about the nature of reality . . . along with a method for taking hold of whatever can be known." According to Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 105), a paradigm "guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontological and epistemologically fundamental ways." It is this system of beliefs and assumptions that guide and motivate the knower to pursue what can be known. This makes it necessary to disclose any ontological and epistemological assumptions for "taking hold of whatever can be known" concerning the meaning of "evangelical Christian" college.

Ontological assumptions are those that relate to the nature of being. They are the perceptions people hold regarding reality. This research focused on the unique perceptions, the personal constructs and realities of various stakeholders of Spring Arbor College regarding the meaning of "evangelical Christian" college. The exploration of the person-specific meanings of these terms implies a constructivist context for this study. The constructivist framework focuses not only on investigating and describing the multiple perceptions held by the subjects of the study (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1994, p. 110), but also on the development of a new construct stemming from the research itself. Inquiry in this context involves a search for truth, defined as "the best informed and most sophisticated construction on which there is consensus at a given time"

(Schwandt, 1994, p. 128). These individual constructs were the targets of this inquiry.

Epistemology refers to the origin, nature and methods of human knowing and the relationship between the knower and the known. It asks the question: Is knowledge something that is derived by the individual in a removed and objective manner, or is it subject to and impacted by transactions between circumstances, people, information, and environments (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, pp. 105-117)? The epistemological assumption that drove this study was that an understanding of what evangelical Christian college means is likely to be impacted by the knower's relationship with the various sources of what he/she claims to know. Meanings are likely reflective of personal transactions with variables such as church, community, family, one's own constituent group and even the college itself. What people claim to know concerning the terms evangelical Christian college can best be understood within this transactional context. Knowledge development is transactional and created for and by the knower (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, pp. 105-107).

These ontological and epistemological assumptions represent a system of ideas that "give us some judgment about the nature of reality . . . along with a method for taking hold of whatever can be known" (Reese, 1980, p. 352). Ontologically, this study sought to identify the *relative constructs* people have regarding what they believe an evangelical Christian college is and should be. Epistemologically, this research was grounded in the assumption that a person's knowledge of the terminology "evangelical Christian college" is likely to be *transactional* in nature and dependent on and reflective of the relationship

between the knower and the known (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 37).

*Qualitative/Quantitative Model*

This research employed a dominant-less dominant design using both qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry (Creswell, 1994 p. 177-190). Building upon the literature review, qualitative interviewing served as the dominant means of investigating common themes and issues. A quantitative survey was then employed for the purpose of assessing the relative weight of these themes and issues (Creswell, 1994, p.177-190).

The dominance of qualitative research for this particular study rested on some basic tenets of the qualitative paradigm. Qualitative research is that which "values participants' perspectives on their worlds and seeks to discover those perspectives" (Marshall and Rossman, 1989, p. 11). Consequently, qualitative methodology attempts to get closer to the actor's perspective through detailed interviewing and observation. This method of research focuses on the emic and idiographic elements of the issue of study (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, pp. 1-6).

The dominance of a qualitative methodology facilitated the discovery of participant perspectives by attending to their individual and personal points of view (Marshall and Rossman, 1989, p. 11). It permitted a detailed focus on different constituent descriptions associated with the meaning of "evangelical Christian" college.

Quantitative analysis was the less dominant component of this research in the sense that it followed the lead of the qualitative interviews. First qualitative inquiry was used to investigate and add depth to the understanding of common

themes, then a survey instrument, along with appropriate statistical analysis, was used in assessing the relative weight of these themes.

Interviews were first conducted within each of the constituent groups: faculty, staff, administration, board members, students, parents, pastors, and alumni. Two or three people from each of these groups were asked this question: "Spring Arbor College defines itself as an 'evangelical Christian' College, what does 'evangelical Christian' College mean to you?" Follow-up questions were based on the theological and social "trigger" issues identified in the literature review of this dissertation. Interviews were therefore constructed to investigate themes and issues related to the definition of an "evangelical Christian" college. These themes were likewise incorporated into the quantitative survey whereby "broader context" comparisons between groups were weighed and measured statistically.

## Description of Population and Sample Selection

A description of the methods of sample selection from the respective populations for both the quantitative and qualitative phases of this study follows. A necessary foundation for this review, however, is a general demographic description of Spring Arbor College and its supporting constituent base.

### *Overview of Spring Arbor College*

Spring Arbor College employs approximately 160 staff and slightly less than 100 faculty on its main campus. The college is a member of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities and the Association of Free Methodist

Educational Institutions. The College still claims strong ties to its sponsoring church. Thirty-four different majors are offered with 1,050 students enrolled. About 20% of the student body are Free Methodist with most of the remaining 80% from multiple other Protestant denominations. Approximately 96% of the student body are Caucasian. Average ACT scores are 22.5. While students are not required to espouse Christian faith to enroll, faculty and staff are required to be Christians as a prerequisite for employment. Student life includes required chapel twice a week and there is a community covenant that specifically restricts alcohol and tobacco use, illicit drug use, premarital sexual relationships, and social dancing. Faculty and staff as well are expected to honor this community covenant.

Approximately 51% of the faculty have terminal degrees and about 30% have earned tenure. Faculty are represented by a traditional Faculty Senate which can be attended by anyone holding faculty status. Senior level administrators can, likewise, attend. There is a Staff Association for those with non-faculty status. This organization mirrors the Faculty Senate and is intended to be a representative body. A more exclusive Faculty Forum exists for those faculty who teach 12 credit hours or more in a given semester. No administrators are permitted to attend Faculty Forum. The chairpersons of the Faculty Forum and the Staff Association both serve as representatives to the President's Cabinet, which is comprised of the vice presidents for academics, student development, business affairs, admissions, and institutional advancement. The athletic director, the director of marketing and the director for institutional technology also serve on this cabinet.

A self-perpetuating board of trustees governs the College. There are representative boards for the alumni and for the parents. The sponsoring church conferences are the East Michigan, Southern Michigan and North Michigan and Ohio conferences of the Free Methodist Church. Representatives from each of the conferences serve on the board of trustees. Sixty-seven percent of the Board is Free Methodist with 23% being Free Methodist pastors. Thirty members of the Board are male with four being female.

*Qualitative*

In the context of these unique institutional distinctives, the qualitative phase of this study involved sample selection that was purposive and not random. This selection was made with the intention of identifying participants who varied regarding the possible characteristics of their respective group. Within each of the seven constituency groups, two or three representative individuals were selected. Sixteen total interviewees were chosen to be part of the qualitative phase of this study. Because of the small size of the Spring Arbor College community, and the commitment to confidentiality, a limited description of the participants is offered below:

- Faculty: Three members – Two male and one female. Each of these faculty members were employed with Spring Arbor College for more than 20 years and had held various leadership positions ranging from department chair and/or dean of respective areas. None were alumni of Spring Arbor College. Two of these members had terminal degrees and one held a master level graduate degree. All three attended different churches, two of which were

not Free Methodist.

- Staff: Two members – Two male. One of these staff members held various leadership positions serving on the President's Cabinet and multiple other committees. The other staff member had a more defined role and was not as broadly involved in the multiple facets of the College's governance structure. Both staff members held graduate degrees. Neither held terminal degrees. One was an alumnus of Spring Arbor College and the other was not. Both attended different churches other than the Free Methodist church.
- Students: Three members – Two female and one male. All three students were involved in multiple aspects of the College community. One student was a leader within the Student Association (i.e. student government). All three were involved in athletics. None had chosen to be employees of the Student Development office and, therefore, had no official role in policy enforcement. While all attended the Free Methodist church on occasion, all three had different denominational backgrounds.
- Pastors: Two members – Two male. Both of these pastors held leadership roles within the denomination in addition to being active pastors. One was an alumnus of Spring Arbor College while the other was not. One had sent his own children to Spring Arbor College while the other had not.
- Alumni: Two members – One male and one female. Both were active in leadership service to the College. One had served on the Alumni Board and the other served on the Board of Trustees. One had chosen to send his/her children to Spring Arbor College. The other had chosen to send his/her children to another evangelical college. Both attended Free Methodist

churches.

- Parents: Two members – One male and one female. Both of these parents were also alumni of Spring Arbor College. They both had sent more than one child to the College. Both held graduate degrees and both attended Free Methodist churches.
- Board of Trustees: Two members – One male and one female. Both members of the Board of Trustees had served for more than 10 years on the Board. They were both alumni of the College and held graduate degrees and/or terminal degrees. Both were active members of the Free Methodist church.

Concern for transferability was the backdrop for the sample selection within this qualitative paradigm. In quantitative research, the researcher is responsible for arguing why his or her findings are generalizable. In qualitative research, the researcher must provide enough information to help a reader decide if the information derived from the study is transferable to other settings (O' Brien and Charlton, 1996, p. 66; Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 241). To enhance the transferability of this study, and to add a measure of control to the potential subjectivity of the research, a research advisory committee was used for selecting participants from the above-described populations. The research advisory committee functioned as follows:

- This committee was comprised of the following individuals: Assistant Vice President of Alumni Affairs, Associate Dean of Students, President of the Student Association, Secretary to the Board of Trustees, and the Chair of the Faculty Forum.

- Committee members were briefed on the purpose of this study and instructed that their role was to assist in the identification and selection of a pool of possible participants for interviews. The Committee guided and assisted in constructing the respective samples and offered critique as to the extent to which each group included individuals with characteristics that illustrated the diversity of that group.

*Quantitative*

In the quantitative phase of this project, the total population for each of the seven groups within the study was included and, therefore, no random sampling was done. The seven groups surveyed were faculty, staff, students, parents' council, pastors, alumni board and trustees of the College. The Spring Arbor College Office of Computing Technology provided lists of all faculty, staff, and students currently enrolled and/or associated with the College. The Spring Arbor College Office of Institutional Advancement provided the list of parents and alumni. The College President's Office provided the list of Spring Arbor College Board of Trustees members. Finally, each of the superintendents of the College's four sponsoring Free Methodist conferences provided lists of their respective pastors. Population definitions and sizes and are as follows:

- Students were defined as all students enrolled in the traditional campus program during the fall semester of the 2000-2001 academic year. The student population size was 1050. The survey instrument was administered to all 1050.

- Pastors were defined as all pastors in the four sponsoring Free Methodist conferences for Spring Arbor College. These conferences are the Southern Michigan Conference, the East Michigan Conference, the North Michigan Conference, and the Ohio Conference. The population size for pastors was 273. The survey instrument was administered to all 273.
- Faculty was defined as all faculty members employed in the traditional campus program of Spring Arbor College. The population size for faculty was 97. The survey was administered to all 97.
- Staff was defined as all non-teaching employees of Spring Arbor College. This includes executive level administration (the president and his cabinet) and all other support staff. The population size for staff was 164. The survey was administered to all campus staff.
- The Board of Trustees was defined as all members of the Board of Trustees of Spring Arbor College. This population total was 34. The survey was administered to all 34.
- Alumni were defined as all members of the Alumni Board of the College. This population size is 27. The survey was given to all 27.
- Parents were defined as all members of the Parents Council of the College. This population size was 32. The survey was administered to all 32.

Further information relevant to the demographic characteristics of the respondents for each of these populations is offered in Chapter 4.

## Description of Instrument

The literature review served as the basis for the development of the qualitative interview protocol. A quantitative survey instrument was then developed, with the literature and the qualitative interview process serving as a foundation for this instrument. The following is a detailed description of the development of the two research instruments of the study.

### *Qualitative*

The dominant method for investigating primary definitional themes was through in-depth interviews. The development of the interview protocol for this qualitative phase of the study drew upon the information gleaned from the literature review.

The interviews were semi-structured in that they explored factors that appeared most salient in a review of the literature while at the same time honoring "how the participant framed and structured [his or her] responses" (Marshall and Rossman, 1989, p. 82). As noted in chapter two, the literature review demonstrated the salience of four commonly accepted dimensions of inquiry that are pertinent to a discussion of "evangelical Christian" college. These four basic dimensions can be summarized in the questions: 1) What does one believe about the Bible? 2) What does one believe about salvation, 3) What does one believe about Jesus Christ and 4) What does one believe about evangelism (Green, Guth, Smidt and Kelstedt, 1996, p. 244; Rosell 1996, p. 8; Bebbington 1989, pp. 2-14)?

In addition to these theological dimensions there was evidence of a

discussion of social values taking place within evangelical Christianity. An example of this can be seen in the critique offered by the National Association of Evangelicals concerning such issues as sexual standards and practices, abortion, alcohol and tobacco use, gambling, pornography, etc. (National Association of Evangelicals Resolutions, 1997). This study assumed that a definition of evangelical Christian college would include attention to such issues and positions. As Richard Hughes contended, evangelical colleges must be very sensitive to the "boundaries that are operative among their church and alumni constituencies " (Hughes and Adrian, 1997, p. 325).

These theological and social boundaries represent the salient issues that may serve to set the context for a discussion of a definition of "evangelical Christian" college. The interview instrument (See appendix A) was, therefore, structured to accomplish two things. First, the instrument was dialectical in that it was flexible and respected the framing and direction of the participant responses. Second, the instrument followed the lead of the literature and inquired about what the participant believed an "evangelical Christian" college is regarding its position on: 1) the Bible; 2) salvation; 3) Jesus Christ; and 4) evangelism. Finally, the interview instrument also addressed the social issues of sexual standards and practices, abortion, alcohol and tobacco use, gambling, and dancing (see interview protocol).

*Quantitative*

The quantitative phase, by design within this study, followed the qualitative interviews as described above. The quantitative instrument, thus,

consisted of 29 different items (See appendix B). Eight of these items asked the respondent to provide information concerning gender, age, ethnicity, college class status, church affiliation, college affiliation (i.e., student, alumnus, etc.), and religious identity. The remaining 21 items asked the respondent to rate the extent to which he or she believed an evangelical Christian College should maintain a certain position. Rating each item was done on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree). Of these 21 items, the first 12 were paired-questions grouped around the key theological themes or tenets deemed relevant to the definition of an evangelical Christian College. These tenets were: 1) the authority and inspiration of the Bible; 2) the accuracy of the Bible; 3) the virgin birth of Jesus Christ; 4) the miracles of Jesus Christ; 5) the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and 6) the exclusivity of salvation through Jesus Christ alone. The remaining nine items focused on the prevalent lifestyle stances commonly associated with an evangelical Christian College. These lifestyle stance items were 1) the mandate for evangelism; 2) premarital and extramarital sexual relationships; 3) homosexual relationships; 4) abortion; 5) social dancing; 6) alcohol use; 7) tobacco use; 8) gambling; and 9) social justice. Tables 1 and 2 show these basic theological tenets and lifestyle stances and the corresponding survey items for each.

Table 1

Theological tenets common to evangelical Christian colleges

| Theological tenet | Corresponding Survey item |
|---|---|
| Bible as inspired and authoritative word of God<br>Variable: **Inspired** | 1. An evangelical Christian college should maintain that the Bible is the only inspired and authoritative word of God.<br>2. An evangelical Christian college should be open to other books being as inspired and authoritative as the Bible. |
| Bible without error<br>Variable: **W/O Error** | 3. An evangelical Christian college should maintain that the Bible is without error.<br>4. An evangelical Christian college should be open to the Bible containing some errors. |
| Virgin birth<br>Variable: **Virgin** | 5. An evangelical Christian college should maintain that the virgin birth of Jesus Christ is an historical fact.<br>6. An evangelical Christian college should be open to other explanations for the birth of Jesus Christ. |
| Miracles of Jesus<br>Variable: **Miracles** | 7. An evangelical Christian college should maintain that the miracles of Jesus are historical facts.<br>8. An evangelical Christian college should be open to other explanations to the miracles of Jesus Christ. |
| Resurrection of Jesus<br>Variable: **Resurrection** | 9. An evangelical Christian college should maintain that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is an historical fact.<br>10. An evangelical Christian college should be open to other explanations regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ. |
| Jesus the only means of salvation<br>Variable: **Salvation** | 11. An evangelical Christian college should maintain that Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation.<br>12. An evangelical Christian college should be open to a variety of ways to salvation in addition to Jesus Christ. |

Table 2

Lifestyle-stance variables common to evangelical Christian Colleges

| Lifestyle Stance | Corresponding survey item |
|---|---|
| Christians required to evangelize Variable: **Evangelism** | 13. An evangelical Christian college should maintain that Christians are required by Scripture to evangelize, i.e. work to convert people through missions or some other means by sharing one's faith. |
| Alcohol use Variable: **Alcohol** | 14. An evangelical Christian college should have policies against alcohol use. |
| Tobacco use Variable: **Tobacco** | 15. An evangelical Christian college should have policies against tobacco use. |
| Social dancing Variable: **Dancing** | 16. An evangelical Christian college should have policies against social dancing. |
| Gambling Variable: **Gambling** | 17. An evangelical Christian college should have policies again gambling. |
| Premarital and extramarital sex Variable: **Sex** | 18. An evangelical Christian college should have policies again premarital and extramarital sexual relations. |
| Homosexual behavior Variable: **Homosexual** | 19. An evangelical Christian college should have policies against homosexual behavior. |
| Abortion Variable: **Abortion** | 20. An evangelical Christian college should have policies against abortion. |
| Social justice Variable: **Justice** | 21. An evangelical Christian college should promote social justice. |

## Procedures for Collecting Data

Data collection involved the following procedures for both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study.

### *Qualitative*

In most cases the actual interviews were conducted in the student development offices in the Kresge Student Center on Spring Arbor College's campus. In some cases interviews were scheduled and conducted off-campus

because of the scheduling needs of the participants. In all cases the interviews took place in a quiet and private location. Confidentiality was assured and protected.

Participants were identified with the assistance of a research advisory committee. As stated earlier, the respective sampling for the qualitative phase of the research was purposive (not random) and the selection of the respective interviewees was done with the assistance of this committee with the goal of creating a representative sample. These selected candidates were contacted by phone or in person for the purpose of soliciting their involvement. An explanation of the study, its research questions, and its objectives was given to each candidate. Following an affirmative response, a written summary of the study along with a consent form was given to each participant. Interviewing only ensued if the participants signed the consent form. There were no objections from any participants.

Interviews were scheduled to be approximately one hour in length. These interviews were semi-structured in format. For the purposes of consistency and control the researcher conducted all interviews. No assistants were used in this capacity. All interviews, per the approval of the participants, were audio taped. Confidentiality was guaranteed to all participants with only the researcher and his transcription assistant knowing the identity of the participants. Each interviewee was assigned a numerical identification and transcribed interviews were filed accordingly. A code sheet with names and corresponding identification numbers was secured in a separate location. All audiotapes were secured in a locked file in the researcher's office when not in use.

*Quantitative*

Following this qualitative interview phase a quantitative survey was administered. The time frame and method for distributing this survey was as follows:

- This survey was administered during a College chapel during the fall of 1999. Approximately 600 students were present at this chapel session. The survey instrument was then mailed to all students not required to attend this chapel session. Thus, the entire student body received the survey in the early fall of 1999. A follow-up letter and corresponding survey was then done by mail for those who did not respond to the first mailing.
- The College's Board of Trustees was surveyed at their November 1999 board meeting. The survey was then mailed to those who were not in attendance.
- Faculty, staff and administration were surveyed during the fall semester of 1999 at their respective meetings. Follow-up was done individually. The researcher went office to office and left surveys for those who had not responded.
- Pastors from the four sponsoring conferences (Southern Michigan, East Michigan, North Michigan, and Ohio) were either given the surveys at their annual retreats or mailed the surveys. Follow-up was done via the mail as needed.
- The Parents Council members were given the survey at their fall meeting and then follow-up was done by mail.
- The survey was mailed to the Alumni Board members and follow up was done by mail.

Because of the small size of Spring Arbor College the administration of the instrument was very thorough and follow-up was complete and timely. Therefore, participation from each of the groups of the study was extensive. No group within the study participated at a rate less than 54% (pastors), and five groups in the study participated at a rate of 71% or higher (parents, alumni, faculty, staff, and board). The student participation rate was over 57% (see Chapter 4 for a detailed description and analysis).

## Procedures for Data Analysis

Data analysis for the qualitative phase involved transcription, coding, organizational, paring, and statistical strategies. Analysis for the quantitative phase involved the use of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical methods. A review of both is as follows.

### *Qualitative*

The following procedures were used in data analysis:

- A professional secretary transcribed interviews. Transcriptions were checked against the audiotapes of the actual interviews. All typed transcripts were reviewed by the researcher to insure accuracy.
- Data were organized into meaningful categories and common themes. Coding of the data was accomplished using data cards, notes or memos.
- Data were organized according to major topics, similarities, and differences using the constant comparative method as described by Guba and Lincoln (1994). This method is summarized in the following four stages:

1. The data were assigned to categories through the use of the constant comparative method. Data were organized by units that expressed complete thoughts. Then data chunks from each participant were summarized and categorized into response themes.
2. Developing themes were then integrated. Comparison is the basis of this stage, with the goal being consolidation and integration of categories.
3. There was a final check of the assignment of responses to each category. Within each matrix of responses for each sample group, there was a review of commonalties or differences as they emerged.
4. Descriptions of the themes, commonalties and differences were written. This not only presents and clarifies the data, but also aids in comparing any conclusions to the literature pertinent to this research.

*Quantitative*

Entry of data was done manually. MicroCase was the software package used for subsequent data input and manipulation. For each of the theological tenets and lifestyle stances, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to test for significant differences in average responses among the seven different constituent groups. This was deemed to be the appropriate statistical method to assess the varying opinions and the relative weight of these opinions among the groups participating in the study. When an ANOVA test showed significant differences, confidence intervals for individual group means were constructed to identify which constituent groups were significantly different from each other.

As indicated earlier, there were six theological tenets and nine lifestyle issues assessed in the quantitative phase of this study. These theological tenets are: 1) the authority and inspiration of the Bible; 2) the accuracy of the Bible; 3) the virgin birth of Jesus Christ; 4) the miracles of Jesus Christ; 5) the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and 6) the exclusivity of salvation through Jesus Christ alone. The lifestyle stance items pertain to 1) the mandate for evangelism; 2) premarital and extramarital sexual relationships; 3) homosexual relationships; 4) abortion; 5) social dancing; 6) alcohol use; 7) tobacco use; 8) gambling; and 9) social justice. In the case of the six theological tenets, two items, an affirmative item and a corresponding openness item, were presented in juxtaposition on the survey. For example, participants were asked to rank the first two paired items on a scale of 1 to 5 (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree (see Appendix B). Item #1 was: "An evangelical Christian college should maintain that the Bible is the only inspired and authoritative word of God"; and Item #2 was: "An evangelical Christian College should be open to other books being as inspired and authoritative as the Bible." By asking participants to rank their affirmation of a specific theological tenet and then by asking the same participants how open they were to alternative views, it was possible to assess theological convictions from both a positive and negative perspective. By combining the affirmative *score* (item #1) with its corresponding openness *score* (item #2), a more balanced report concerning a participant's commitment to specific theological definitions of an evangelical Christian college was thus obtained.

To combine these affirmative and openness scores, the following procedures were used. Because a high score for an affirming item indicated commitment to a theological tenet and a low score on the openness item indicated a lack of tolerance for alternative views, a low openness score and a high affirmative score both reflected commitment to the tenet in question. Therefore, in order to calculate a score for each theological tenet, the affirming items (1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11 on the survey), were scored positively (i.e. 1=1, 2=2, 3=3, 4=4, 5=5), and the openness items (2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 on the survey), were scored negatively or "reversed" (i.e. 1=5, 2=4, 3=3, 4=2, 5=1). "Reversing" the openness scores resulted in consistency, with high scores always indicating a high level of agreement and low scores always indicating a low level agreement with the tenet in question. After this positive and negative scoring was done, items were paired (see Tables 1 and 2 for parings) with reference to their respective theological tenets, and the corresponding scores were added together. Therefore, totals for each of these paired items could range from 2 to 10 for any single theological tenet.

For all nine of the following lifestyle stances it was not deemed necessary to have an affirmative/openness dual item. The researcher's position was that, because these variables pertained to objective behaviors (i.e. specific actions or prohibitions) as opposed to more abstract theological constructs, it was appropriate to ask one question rather than two in juxtaposition. Therefore, the questions relative to these lifestyle stances simply asked the participant if he or she agreed or disagreed regarding the behavior in question. Consequently, there

was only one item for each of the nine lifestyle stances. Each of these respective items were scored positively on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Again, Tables 1 and 2 show the names of the lifestyle stances along with their respective survey items.

As stated, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was then performed to test for significant differences in average responses among the seven different constituent groups. When an ANOVA test showed significant differences, confidence intervals for individual group means were constructed to identify which constituent groups were significantly different from each other.

For all nine of the lifestyle stances, the scores ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). For the other six basic theological tenets, the scores ranged from 2 to 10, since they were the combined scores of the affirmative/openness items as described above. Therefore, the results of the analysis were reported two different ways. First, for each variable, the corresponding ANOVA test was reported using the corresponding scale (2 to 10 for theological tenets and 1 to 5 for lifestyle stances). Second, for comparisons among different variables, the mean response for each group on all variables was reported on a scale from 1 to 5. In the case of the six basic theological tenet variables, where the scores of two items were combined, the means were halved.

## Limitations

The limitations of this study include:

- Spring Arbor College is the case study. While findings may suggest issues of interest for similar colleges, generalizability beyond this case should not be assumed.
- While there were controls within the aforementioned design that addressed the potential bias of the researcher (the research advisory committee, etc.), the subjectivity of ontological and epistemological assumptions must be acknowledged. The researcher and the research advisory committee are actually part of the community being assessed. Resulting data and conclusions should be reviewed within this context.
- There was an attempt to achieve a thorough review of salient issues. The resulting list of issues should not, however, be construed as exhaustive.
- Sampling in the quantitative phase reflects an attempt to survey the entire population of the Alumni Board and the Parents Council. Data should not be generalizable to the broader base of parents and alumni who did not respond.
- Sampling of students, faculty, staff, and board members involved an attempt to survey entire populations of each of these groups. While the response rates for these groups were positive, as stated earlier, it must still be acknowledged that any generalizability of corresponding data should not correlate with these response rates.

## Summary

The following is a summary of the key points developed in the preceding discussion of methodology and rationale.

- The ontological assumption pertaining to this study was constructivist in nature. Ideas about meaning were assumed to be constructed, not in isolation, but as the individuals interacted with various sources of information.
- The epistemological assumption was that knowledge is transactionally acquired. An understanding of what "evangelical Christian" college means was likely to be impacted by the knower's relationship with the various sources of what he or she claimed to know. Meanings were likely reflective of personal transactions between variables such as church, community, family, and even the college itself.
- The methodology of this study reflected a qualitative/quantitative, dominant/less-dominant model. First salient themes and constructs were identified through the use of qualitative interviews. Next the relative weight of these themes was assessed through the use of a quantitative survey. This model was sequenced so that the quantitative survey instrument built upon the foundation of the qualitative inquiry.
- The population of study included students, parents, alumni, pastors, trustees, alumni board members, faculty, staff and administrators of Spring Arbor College.
- Sampling for the qualitative phase was purposive with guidance from a selection committee. Sampling for the quantitative phase included the entire population of students, the alumni board, the parents' council, board of

trustees, faculty, staff and pastors in Michigan and Ohio.

- Data analysis of the qualitative phase of the study included the use of the constant/comparative method as a means of identifying, grouping and assessing common themes.
- Data analysis for the quantitative phase of the study included the use of analysis of variance (ANOVA) to quantify and measure the relative weight of participant perceptions of the six key theological tenets and nine key lifestyle stances deemed relevant to the study.

# CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF DATA

This chapter focuses on the presentation of the data relevant to this study. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first pertains to the qualitative phase of the study and the second pertains to the quantitative. With both sections there is a presentation of resulting data and corresponding analysis.

## Section I: Qualitative Data

The following section focuses on the presentation of the qualitative data. Data are reviewed within the context of six key themes. Five of these themes stem from the literature review relevant to this study: 1) salvation through Jesus Christ; 2) the mandate for evangelism; 3) the centrality of Jesus Christ and his deity; 4) the authority of the Bible; and 5) lifestyle stances and behavioral standards. Through the course of the actual interviews, a sixth primary theme emerged beyond what was predicted by the literature review. This theme is the "integration of faith and learning." Several of the interviewees emphasized this as a central tenet of the evangelical Christian college and this theme was therefore added to the primary headings in the following analysis of data.

### *Theme #1: Salvation through Jesus Christ.*

All 16 (100%) of the interviewees in the study affirmed the exclusivity of salvation through Jesus. There is a repeated contention that an evangelical Christian college is an institution that believes in salvation through Jesus Christ

alone. Jesus is the only way. It is Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection and his atonement for sin that provides humanity with the means necessary for salvation and redemption. This exclusive view is considered a fundamental facet of the Christian faith and foundational to an evangelical worldview. The following are some examples of statements that describe salvation as being through Jesus Christ alone and how central this position is to the definition of an evangelical Christian college.

Pastor #4 indicated that the primary basis for an evangelical Christian college is found in the teachings of Jesus Christ. This pastor further mentioned Christ's incarnation, and his corresponding life, death and resurrection. Redemptive truth, that is, salvation, is centered in Jesus Christ being lord and savior and on Christ's corresponding atonement of sin. He said:

> [An evangelical Christian College] finds its primary basis in the teaching of Jesus Christ. The reality [is] that Jesus became incarnate and lived for 33 years, gave his life for us on the cross, [and] that redemptive truth is centered in the fact that Jesus Christ is indeed savior and lord (Pastor #4).

This position is affirmed in follow-up questions:

> Q; HOW IS SALVATION OBTAINED? Salvation is obtained by a gift of God's grace. It's by grace. . . It's nothing I do. It's all about God and what he did on the cross . . . We all come as sinners regardless of how good or how bad we have been. We are not deserving. There's no way I can work to earn my right to be saved or accepted by God. It's only because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and what he did for me there. Q: IS THERE ROOM TO DISCUSS SALVATION OUTSIDE OF THE WORK OF JESUS? I don't know how. I don't know where, because of the statements of Jesus being so succinct. I would believe there is salvation outside of Jesus Christ, if it were possible. But Jesus said, "I am the way. I am the truth. I am the light. No one comes to the father but by me" (Pastor #4).

Pastor #4 assumed that salvation is only possible because of Christ. There is no room for an evangelical Christian college to deviate from this position.

Parents and staff shared similar opinions. One parent described teaching another way to salvation as "absolutely blasphemous" (Parent #9). A staff member said:

> [Jesus] claimed to be the only way of salvation. I believe that that's true. I believe that there's no other way . . .To me that is a matter of consistency. Scripture says that is the case. The truth of salvation through Christ alone is the central doctrine of historic, orthodox Christianity. So if an evangelical Christian college doesn't agree to that then they have completely lost it (Staff #3).

Hence, stepping away from the historic and orthodox position on Christocentric salvation is perceived as paramount to the loss of the College's evangelical distinctive and even blasphemous.

Students and faculty agreed. One student clearly stated that the position an evangelical Christian college should take regarding salvation is: "Jesus is the reason for salvation so the way to salvation is through him" (Student #14). When asked the follow up question: IS THERE ANY OTHER WAY?, this student responded: "No. And I think a college should state that firmly, that Jesus Christ is the way to salvation". Asked: WHAT POSITION SHOULD AN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE TAKE REGARDING SALVATION?, Faculty #7 responded: "Well, first of all [the position of an evangelical Christian college should be] that we are in need of a savior and that Jesus provided that and is the only one who provides that" (Faculty #7). Thus, both students and faculty emphasized that an evangelical Christian college should state firmly that Jesus

Christ is the only way to salvation. This position is considered a critical distinction relative to what it means for the college to be evangelical.

Finally, an alumnus indicated that an evangelical Christian college's position on salvation must be "the basic biblical position. This is that God provides salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. I think that the Christian college ought to have a forthright commitment to the orthodox position with regard to salvation through Christ" (Alumnus #13). To hold any position other than one that is considered basic, biblical and orthodox is not perceived as being consistent with the mission of the evangelical Christian college. This alumnus, along with all other interviewees associated with this study, contended that the evangelical view of salvation is Christocentric and exclusive. Salvation can be had only through faith in Jesus Christ, his atoning work, his death and resurrection. An evangelical Christian college, by definition, must not step away from this. To do so is considered equivalent to losing the right to define oneself as evangelical.

*Theme #2: The mandate for evangelism.*

All 16 (100%) of the interviewees also affirmed the priority of evangelism, which is viewed as a central task where members of the college community are called to constantly share the Christian faith in word and deed. The faculty, staff and administration of the college believed that they should be serving as role models and witnessing to others about the importance of following Jesus Christ. This proselytizing or evangelism was viewed as a "bottom line" responsibility of

an evangelical Christian college. Outreach, apologetics, and the sharing of the Gospel message are considered essential. Employees and students alike are thought to have the duty of working to "change the world" and "present the claims of Christ" to the "lost." A college is not considered evangelical if evangelism is not central to its mission.

Two examples of this commitment to evangelism are found in the statements of a pastor and an alumnus. Both of these interviewees affirmed that evangelism is critical to the very mission of the institution and a basic part of the College's commitment. Evangelism is viewed as being important enough to declare that without it, the College has fallen short of its central call and mission. Pastor #4 observed:

> Well, it seems that a central task of the Christian college ought to be to prepare young people for the evangelization of the world . . . It seems that that's central to the task of the Christian college--to prepare young people to be servants of the world in such a way that their lives will be attractive in bringing others to Jesus Christ (Pastor #4).

Alumnus #13 similarly emphasized that an evangelical Christian college has an inherent obligation to evangelize. This board member contended:

> I think the whole missions and evangelism thrust is inherent in the evangelical position, theologically and spiritually . . . I would want to see this as a basic part of the commitment. Not just the commitment, but the actual life and practice of the school (Alumnus #13).

For this pastor and alumnus, it is not only critical to have a philosophical commitment to evangelism, but it is also imperative that the evangelical Christian college community practice and promote evangelism through lifestyle and personal behavior.

A student and faculty member added to these comments by emphasizing role-modeling, lifestyle and daily relationships. They saw evangelism within the evangelical Christian college as a method of living that is so pervasive that it cannot be escaped as an integral part of the College community. Student #5 said:

> I think that it is a very important part of what we stand for and what we believe because Christ calls us to constantly be sharing our faith, whether it's just through our lifestyle or through our relationships or through just open ministry (Student #5).

Faculty # 8 agreed:

> First of all, I think faculty, staff, and the administration of an evangelical Christian College are in the process of evangelizing others. They are role models for that. And so it would be almost impossible not to perpetuate the importance of evangelizing and to witness to others about what God has done in one's life. The importance of being a follower of Jesus Christ becomes a mode or method of living and you can't escape that that is an integral part of the institution. (Faculty #8)

A parent and a pastor emphasized the importance of presenting the Gospel to the students who attend an evangelical Christian college and, likewise, the importance of teaching these students the responsibility they have to evangelize others. It is the college's duty to convert students and to teach students the importance of working to convert others in the same way. Parent #9 stated:

> Well, when I hear evangelical it sets it even further apart from Christian because Christian is kind of one of those names that's thrown around sometimes that could mean anything . . . But when evangelical is thrown in there with that, it means more to me because then it means that we feel that it is our duty to win others to the Lord and follow the principles that the Lord set down for us in that we need to tell others and win others to Christ (Parent #9).

In describing what the evangelical Christian college means to him, Pastor #10 stated: "And to go into that deeper it means also, I think, that the school has as one of its bottom lines helping young people understand [sharing the gospel] is a part of the Christian faith" (Pastor #10).

Two board members summarized this priority of evangelism by claiming that imparting the Christian faith to others represents a central commitment within the evangelical Christian college. An evangelical Christian college is grounded in the concept of evangelism, which means reaching out and spreading specific beliefs to the uninitiated. Board member #15 stated: "Evangelical means evangelism which means outreach, which means that we are to spread the belief that we have to others" (Board member #15). Board member #16 added these comments:

> Evangelical, of course, comes from the strong Greek word of the good news of the gospel and, therefore, this kind of institution is . . . a faith-affirming kind of institution--A good news place and it ought to have joy, the hope, the outlook . . . an optimism, all built around that redemptive hope. But it's ultimately one that's going to reach out . . . So evangelical then says that [we have a] faith-affirming tone with outreach (Board Member #16).

*Theme #3: The centrality of Jesus Christ and his deity.*

All 16 (100%) interviewees referred to Jesus Christ as being central to the mission of the evangelical Christian college. All affirmed the historical truth of his deity and incarnation as the Son of God. Likewise all affirm Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection. There were, however, two (one faculty member and one board member) outlying opinions regarding the virgin birth and miracles of Jesus.

These two interviewees (noted below) believe the evangelical Christian college would not compromise its definition if it remained open to other explanations regarding the miracles and virgin birth.

Three of those who affirmed the historically orthodox position on Jesus Christ, his divinity, his death, resurrection, virgin birth and miracles, are a staff member, a pastor and a board member. Their statements demonstrated a strong and non-negotiable stance. The position on Jesus Christ and his identity is considered the most important doctrine of any for an evangelical Christian college. Staff #2 firmly stated that Jesus is the second person of the Trinity. He is fully God and fully human in his incarnation. His death and resurrection are historical facts and serve as the greatest proof of his claims to be the son of God. Likewise this staff member clearly affirmed the virgin birth, the miracles of Jesus, and the death and resurrection as being critical to the story of Jesus because they serve to add credibility to the historicity and validity of his identity:

> [Jesus] is the second person of the Trinity . . . Christ is fully God and fully man. He is the second person of the Godhead. He is the author and foundation of truth, involved intimately in the world through his incarnation. And that very dual nature of Christ . . . is the basis for our salvation. The Christian college has to stand on that. That is the most important doctrine of any for a Christian college to stand on. Once that's lost there's no way that a Christian college can really work. Q: WHAT POSITION SHOULD AN EVANGLEICAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE TAKE REGARDING THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF JESUS? Without the virgin birth there is no dual nature of Christ . . . Without the virgin birth Christ is a person or a supernatural being--not both. Q: WHAT POSITION SHOULD AN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE TAKE REGARDING THE MIRACLES OF JESUS? If you throw out the miracles as they are defined in scripture then you're throwing out a portion of the Bible. Then you don't have any basis for authority at all. Q: WHAT POSITION SHOULD AN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE TAKE REGARDING THE DEATH AND RESURECTION OF JESUS? That's central. That's the central

> message . . . Without the death and resurrection of Christ, Christianity is meaningless. It's a game. It's a nice philosophical system without any basis in reality at all (Staff #2).

Pastor #4 agreed and added that there is really only one position that an evangelical Christian college can take on the matter of Jesus' identity. Jesus is either the son of God or he is a liar. There is no middle ground for an evangelical Christian college on this matter. Standing firm on the historical validity of the virgin birth, miracles and death and resurrection is also central to the definition of an evangelical Christian college. Holding positions to the contrary "obviously is not the position of the evangelical Christian college." He stated:

> I think there is only one position an evangelical Christian College can take regarding Jesus Christ. That indeed as C.S. Lewis said, either [Jesus] is who he said he was or he is the biggest impostor the world has ever seen. To take any other position would be ludicrous to me. Either Jesus is truly the Son of God or he is a liar. He's an impostor. An evangelical Christian would certainly have to confess that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life and that no one comes to the Father except through him. Q: VIRGIN BIRTH OF JESUS? If you want to be [liberal] then you accept the position that this was myth . . . That obviously is not the position of the evangelical Christian College. Q: WHAT POSITION DO YOU THINK AN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE SHOULD TAKE REGARDING THE MIRACLES OF JESUS AND WHAT POSITION DO YOU THINK IT SHOULD TAKE REGARDING THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS? How could a dead man rise from the grave and live again? And that's central to the whole Christian faith. Because, as Paul said, if Christ is not raised from the dead then our faith is vain and we might as well become agnostics or something else. But if we're truly evangelical Christians, then it becomes a statement of our faith that yes we believe what those 500 witnesses reported after Jesus appeared to them. That he was alive and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive (Pastor #4).

Finally, Board member #16 summarized for those who adhere to the historic orthodox definition of Jesus Christ and its corresponding importance to the evangelical Christian college:

> When we say that all things come together in him, I don't think there can ever be a shadow of turning from the position that a person must accept Jesus Christ and his incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection as the events which are the turning point in human history. And furthermore, that goes beyond that belief to experience, in which there is that centrality of an experience in Jesus Christ, which is our overwhelming purpose. And I don't think there is any wiggle room on that. Q: WHAT POSITION SHOULD AN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE TAKE REGARDING THE VIRGIN BIRTH, MIRACLES AND DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS? When you come to the virgin birth which is absolutely fundamental to the nature of Jesus Christ . . . in which God became fully God and fully human, then you follow that through to the miracles, which basically becomes from our viewpoint the breaking of the transcendent into the commonplace of human experience. And [then] his death and resurrection, if these are not true then, with reference to the miracles, like C.S. Lewis said, you've got to decide if Jesus is a liar or a lunatic and if he's not either one of those then he's got to be the Son of God . . . So if you come to the death and resurrection, you're talking about the very fundamentals by which there is salvation. Wipe out any one of those [virgin birth, miracles, death and resurrection] and you are instantly into a dilemma that will not permit you to be evangelical and basically Christian (Board member #16).

The statements of two students illustrated the widespread belief that all of campus life should focus around faith in Christ. All faculty, staff and students should consider Jesus Christ their model and strive to live like him. Student #14 noted that Spring Arbor College is founded on this belief in Jesus Christ and we should "make no excuses for what we believe." Student #5 specifically focused on the need for all faculty to be Christians and to model their lives after Christ and believe in him as the Son of God:

> I think [evangelical Christian college] means a college that strives for all its staff, faculty and students to live like Christ in every possible aspect of

> what they're learning and their lifestyle. Q: SHOULD ALL FACULTY BE CHRISTIAN? Yes. I don't mean in terms of any particular denomination, but they should believe that Christ is the son of God and they should strive to live like Him (Student #5).

Student #14 added that all aspects of the evangelical college's curricular and co-curricular life should be approached from the perspective of Jesus Christ being "the one true belief." She stated:

> A Christian College based on an evangelical foundation would be [one that] approaches all things from the perspective that Jesus Christ is the only belief we hold true. So, therefore, classes, and our campus life, and everything is focused around our faith and should reflect our Christian beliefs as well. I guess, in essence, it would just be that because we believe in Jesus Christ our school will reflect that and be founded on that and we make no excuses for what we believe (Student #14).

As stated above, all the 16 interviewees agreed on the centrality of Jesus to an evangelical Christian college. All agreed regarding Christ's deity, his incarnation, death and resurrection. Fourteen of the 16 interviewed agreed that the virgin birth and miracles of Jesus are, likewise, central and critical to the definition of an evangelical Christian college. There were two interviewees, however, who expressed openness to alternative views on the virgin birth and the miracles of Jesus. Maintaining a traditional orthodox interpretation of these two positions is not considered essential to Faculty #8 and Board member #15. Because Faculty #8 accepts the possibility of alternative positions, his response is quoted at length:

> If one says one is a Christian college, one is saying right up front that the college is working with the belief that Christ exists/existed as articulated in the Bible, which is our main knowledge of who he is as well as maybe who God is. And so the teachings of Jesus Christ are an integral part of everything that goes on at an evangelical Christian College. Q: WHAT POSITION SHOULD AN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE TAKE

> REGARDING THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF JESUS? I am not aware of an evangelical Christian College that perpetuates a strong disbelief in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. So, I struggle here with maybe what should be and what is. Certainly it is a very popular and well-supported point of view by those involved in those colleges. So, I think they need to support that, but I see room for faculty and constituency, which would include students, to take alternative positions without being separated from the evangelical Christian College. Q: WHAT POSITION SHOULD AN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE TAKE REGARDING THE MIRACLES OF JESUS? Again, I think the tradition and the message of the Bible, as I interpret it, would embrace Jesus' ability to perform miracles . . . The miracles of feeding [the 5000], etc. I think it's something that has credence. Again, I wouldn't separate someone from the evangelical Christian College who might feel that that might not be a reality statement as much as a message statement (Faculty #8).

Board member #15 demonstrated a similarly open perspective regarding the position an evangelical Christian college could take regarding the virgin birth and miracles of Jesus. This trustee stated:

> I believe in the virgin birth. I don't think it's necessary to take a position. So, I do not think that it is a central issue to Christianity. I believe in the miracles. I still think that there can be discussion (Board member #15).

*Theme #4: The authority of the Bible.*

Sixteen of the interviewees (100%) affirmed that an evangelical Christian college should maintain that the Bible is the authoritative word of God. The Bible is considered the ultimate written and trustworthy record of God's revelation to humanity. It is believed to be completely truthful in all that it affirms. It should be noted, however, that many of the interviewees did not equate this complete truthfulness with inerrancy. The Bible is unerring as it conveys the truth of God, but it should not be considered an "academic book" on matters such as

mathematics, science, etc. It is not essential for an evangelical Christian College to subscribe to inerrancy. To do so is not considered academically accurate. Examples of these positions follow.

Two pastors referred to the Free Methodist denominational doctrine regarding the Bible. They maintained that it is critical for an evangelical Christian college to endorse the Bible as being fully authoritative. A college cannot be considered evangelical if does not have such policies. It is the standard by which the academy is to evaluate varying claims of truth. Both of these pastors, however, indicated that they did not believe the inerrancy stance is intellectually honest and, therefore, that it is not a necessary position of an evangelical Christian college. Pastor #4 stated:

> I think if evangelical, certainly the Christian college would say that the Bible is fully authoritative in all if affirms and I personally would say that a college wouldn't deserve the title "evangelical" if they don't affirm the fact that the word of God is fully authoritative . . . I personally don't believe that it is essential of a Christian college to say for instance that the word of God is inerrant or that there are no errors . . . To say that since it was written the subsequent transmission of all the many different texts and manuscripts and so forth are without error would be a strong stretch for me. And I certainly wouldn't personally think that would be academically accurate to hold the Christian college to that standard (Pastor #4).

Pastor #10 added:

> I like the Free Methodist Church's article of religion on the Bible which says it bears unerring witness to Jesus Christ the Living Word as it testifies to the early church and subsequent councils. It is the trustworthy record of God's revelation, completely truthful in all it affirms. It has been faithfully preserved and proves itself true in human experience. That's a lot different than the inerrancy thing that I think is sort of a buzzword. To me this is a very intellectually honest statement because it is not dealing with the different manuscripts and dictations therein. It just says that what it is meant to do it is doing. And I think that is the posture the Christian

> college ought to have. That God's word is true in all it affirms (Pastor #10).

Board member #16 agreed and commented on the importance of the Bible being central in the search for and proclamation of truth:

> The Christian College is one that is committed to the search and discovery of truth and its proclamation because Christian means that we can discover the truth . . . It also means, in our context of Protestant and Wesleyan tradition . . . there is a centrality of the word of God as it relates to the search, discovery and proclamation of [truth] (Board Member #16).

Parent #11 went further and summarized that the adjective "evangelical" means adherence to the conservative, fundamental facets of the Christian faith, including the belief that the Bible is the inspired word of God.

> Evangelical just further refines the term Christian. It modifies it to refer to that branch of Christianity that subscribes to more conservative fundamental facets of the faith. The bible is the inspired Word of God, the virgin birth, Christ's atonement for sins, the resurrection, the second coming, those basics (Parent #11).

The Bible is also viewed as the single and only word of God. Staff #3, Parent #9 and Alumnus #13 agreed and emphasized the authority of the Bible and its exclusive status. There are no other books that should be considered equal in inspiration. The Bible is the only word of God. The position of historic, orthodox Christianity and that of the evangelical Christian college should be one and the same. Any other position would not be considered compatible with the fundamental commitments of an evangelical Christian college. All three, however, agreed that it is not necessary for an evangelical Christian college to take a rigid stance on inerrancy. Concerning the Bible as "the only authoritative word of God," Staff #3 said:

> Well, according to Revelation the last chapter, it is the only authoritative word of God. If you look at historic, orthodox Christianity, there isn't anything other than the canon of scripture that we think of now as the Bible. So, that makes me have a problem with the book of Mormon, it makes me have a problem with Mary Baker Eddy's writings and all those things. It also makes me have a problem with the idea that is prevalent in some Christian circles that there's ongoing revelation by individuals (Staff #3).

Parent #9 agreed and stated that the Bible is not only the word of God but that it is the "only source" and that it "stands alone." Finally, Alumnus #13 elaborated and stated that an evangelical position must hold other writings as being inferior, but that this is not synonymous with inerrancy:

> That's the evangelical position. That the written scriptures are the only authoritative written word of God. The ultimate authority is God and Jesus Christ as in the incarnate word of God. But that in terms of the written word of God I think that the scriptures are the ultimate authority. I personally don't think that that necessarily means a commitment to some of the inerrancy definitions that some have given (Alumnus #13).

*Theme #5: Lifestyle, rules and behavioral expectations.*

The result of this research confirms that a majority of the interviewees supported the traditional evangelical stance on matters of sexual practice, alcohol and tobacco use, abortion, and gambling. It should be noted, however, that in each of these lifestyle and behavior issues dissenting views did emerge. For example, all interviewees (100%) agreed that premarital, extramarital and homosexual relationships are incompatible with a Christian lifestyle. Two of the 16 interviewees, however, contended that an evangelical Christian college should address issues of sexuality through counseling and positive affirmations

rather than prohibitive rules and policies. These two interviewees (Alumnus #12 and Board member #15) maintained that the College should focus on the positive profile of purity of mind and body rather than a negative list of rules. On the issues of alcohol, tobacco, gambling and abortion there are similar disagreements. Thirteen of the 16 interviewees believed an evangelical Christian college should have rules against alcohol and tobacco use, while three (Faculty #8, Board member #15 and Parent #11) disagreed and indicated that the evangelical community is too rules-oriented and that tobacco and alcohol use should not be the litmus test that it has become. Similarly, 14 of the 16 interviewees believed that gambling should be specifically prohibited, while 2 of the interviewees (Faculty #8 and Board member #15) contended that gambling is a personal choice and a non-issue for an evangelical Christian college. On the issue of abortion, 13 of the 16 interviewees agreed that the College should have a policy statement against abortion. Three interviewees (Board member #15, Board member #16 and Faculty #8), however, maintained that abortion is either a political discussion that the college should avoid or it is a matter of personal choice that the college should support.

Dancing is the one lifestyle and behavioral issue where the scales are tipped in the opposite direction. Of the 16 interviewees, 13 indicated that the traditional rule against it is unnecessary. Only three of the interviewees associated with this study (Pastor #4, Staff #3 and Alumnus #13) concurred with the long-standing restrictions on social dancing still cited in the Spring Arbor

College Handbook. And even in the case of these three, there is notable dissonance in the strength of their opinion.

The following are examples of interview comments relevant to lifestyle, rules and behavioral expectations. For clarity they are grouped in the order of 1) sexual standards; 2) abortion; 3) alcohol and tobacco use; 4) gambling; and 5) dancing.

*Sexual Standards.* As mentioned above, all of the interviewees agreed that premarital and extramarital sexual relationships are inconsistent with the traditions and the definition of evangelical Christianity. Fourteen of the 16 interviewees agreed that an evangelical Christian college should have explicit policies against premarital, extramarital, and homosexual relationships. Members of all seven groups of the study supported these policies. They repeatedly referred to what they believed to be clear biblical standards that an evangelical Christian college is bound by definition to honor. Sexual relationships outside of marriage were not acceptable. Premarital heterosexual and homosexual relationships were viewed as inappropriate in all circumstances. It should be noted that in every case proponents of these policies drew a distinction between homosexual orientation and homosexual behavior. A homosexual person is to be treated with respect and without prejudice. As long as he or she agrees with and complies with a policy of premarital sexual abstinence, he or she should not be kept from being part of the College community. But homosexual behavior is viewed as unacceptable. Interviewees

contended that homosexual behavior should be treated the same way as any other premarital sex and is thus defined as sexual sin.

Examples of support for policies and rules governing sexual behavior are found in statements of the following faculty, parent and board members. Faculty #7 said:

> We should not condone premarital or extramarital sexual relationships. They are not honoring to Godly relationships with the community. I believe God has sanctified sex within marriage and that when people engage in sex outside of marriage they are violating a sense of community and honesty in relationships in the community. I don't think the faculty members do enough to help students understand . . . and we need to do a better job. I think we should have a position against that. We should help [students] understand that there is forgiveness and healing if and when they have failed but that we insist on a particular standard of conduct. And there are reasons for it. Q: SEXUAL ORIENTATION? This is a real hard one for me . . . I know that homosexual relationships are not productive. They are destructive . . . I think we have kids who struggle with that and don't know where to turn and aren't willing to accept what we might tell them they need to do. To be celibate is difficult whether you're heterosexual or homosexual. But I think people are called to celibacy and we need to help kids understand the redemptiveness of celibacy and the difficulties they may encounter but they should press on (Faculty #7).

A student concurred with the policy against premarital and extramarital sex and homosexual practice and contended: "I believe that an evangelical Christian college such as Spring Arbor should have penalties or laws or rules against [all] premarital sex and extramarital sex" (Student #6). Parent #9 strongly agreed and added that the evangelical Christian college answer to premarital and extramarital sexual relationships must be:

> Unequivocally no. That to me is cut and dry. No. It's wrong. God did not intend that outside of marriage. Q: SEXUAL ORIENTATION? Again, I think it would be clear-cut in scriptures that any abnormal sex is wrong. In

> scripture it is very clear cut. So on, off campus. Now if there is a gay person who is not practicing their sexuality, they're just fine (Parent #9).

Finally, Alumnus #13 cited the need to have clear disciplinary policies regarding heterosexual and homosexual behavior:

> I think the College should take a clear stand against that. You obviously deal with disciplinary [policies] within the student body. I think the College's commitment ought to be very clear against [premarital and extramarital sexual behavior]. Q: SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR CORRESPONDING PRACTICE? I think there should be a clear position counting homosexual behavior as incompatible with the Christian faith and lifestyle. I think the issue of sexual orientation is a little more complicated because we know the Church shouldn't communicate the view that it is condemning people who may be confused about their sexuality or are homosexual in their orientation. But I think the Church ought to be very clear that heterosexuality is the norm for Christians and that homosexuality is a deviation from that and that homosexual behavior should be considered to be sinful (Alumnus #13).

Two participants in the study believed that an evangelical Christian college did not need specific rules and policies governing sexual practice. While Alumni #12 and Board member #15 agreed that sexual relationships outside the context of marriage were inconsistent with an evangelical position, they expressed their discomfort with a formal position on sexual behaviors. They maintained that sexual behaviors cannot be regulated, and that an evangelical Christian College should promote purity of mind and body, rather than prohibit certain sexual behaviors. The College should employ a counseling approach, rather than a rules-oriented punitive approach, in addressing the issues of sexuality. Alumnus #12 represented this position well:

> I don't think it's good to have a rule. I guess the difference would be what consequences would you enforce? For me, if there is a problem it would be more of an area of counseling for those involved. Q: IF THE COLLEGE HAD NO SPECIFIC RULES OR LIFESTYLE EXPECTATIONS

> BUT APPROPRIATE COUNSEL WAS GIVEN TO STUDENTS, WOULD YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE? I think it can definitely be an expectation. I don't know if you can make it a rule (Alumnus #12).

Board member #15 shared this hesitancy to have rules and policies against sexual behavior:

> I have searched forever and cannot find any psychological proof that [sexual relationships outside of marriage] are harmful. I think extramarital relationships just break down the covenant of marriage. I don't think that if students have premarital sex on this campus that they ought to be kicked out. By the same token I just do not think that it is healthy, it's not a non-issue but I don't know if it's an issue we need to have a formal position on . . . I think our society has made it a more important sin and maybe our evangelical culture has. But biblically, I don't think it is. Q: SHOULD AN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE IDENTIFY THOSE THINGS AS SIN? Yes . . . but that doesn't mean that you use them as criteria for a student being retained in the school. Q: SO IS YOUR CONCERN MORE OF ENFORCEMENT THAN IT IS OF A RULE AGAINST SUCH THINGS? Well I think you would say this is a profile of a Spring Arbor College student and so it would be a positive profile, and that would be pure mind and body, rather than having a checklist saying you can't have premarital sex. Q: FACULTY AND STAFF – WOULD YOU HAVE CERTAIN EXPECTATIONS OF THEM? Well, for example, I think that someone who has committed adultery--it's different than a long-term adulterous affair. So I guess I am saying the same thing. This is the profile that we have. And there are some times that those students [and faculty] are forgiven and there are some times when they aren't and it depends on the situation and the severity. And I would take them individually. Q: SEXUAL ORIENTATION? I honestly don't know. With that issue, if in fact it is true that people are born with their sexual orientation then I have great difficulty saying that someone who is a homosexual cannot ever be loved. I just honestly don't know. Q: IS THERE A DISTINCTION IN YOUR MIND BETWEEN ORIENTATION AND BEHAVIOR? If that person has been born to be homosexual and that in fact is when it happened, then it is part of their being then I don't think it is right for them never to have love. So that's what I'm saying, that there's so much new evidence that that is possible. I frankly at the current time support Spring Arbor College's position that practicing homosexuals can't be on campus because I don't think there is clarity on that issue. But if it is really clarified, then I don't know (Board member #15).

Both of these participants shared the reluctance to define an evangelical Christian college by its rules against sexual practice. Sexual behavior was viewed as something that was impossible to regulate. Rules against sexual practice were viewed as either unrealistic or unredemptive.

*Abortion.* Abortion is not acceptable for 13 of the 16 interviewees. Those representing six of the seven groups in the study (alumni, staff, faculty, parents, pastors, and students) believe an evangelical Christian college should have a policy specifically condemning abortion. The college should, however, respond to those who have had an abortion with grace and support. These interviewees repeatedly cited what they believe is a biblical mandate to honor the sanctity of human life. This mandate takes precedence over a woman's right to choose. The following comments from Staff #3 are an example of such views:

> Scripture is much more clear there than most people realize because the Old Testament talks quite a bit about the penalty for taking the life of an unborn child . . . So that makes abortion not a choice issue--not a right of the mother issue. It takes it out of her hands, just like it takes it out of the father's hands. That life is a gift from God and should be protected in all of its stages, all of its forms. And a Christian college should take that stance (Staff #3).

A faculty member agreed and added:

> I think we ought to have a statement that says we do not condone abortion, we condemn it. If you have difficulties, if you get pregnant, and you need our help we will be redemptive in extending help to you. But our stance is we are against abortion (Faculty #7).

Parent #9 concurred and said that an evangelical Christian college should not condone abortion but should openly stand against it:

> It's murder and we should be speaking out against it . . . That would be one we'd come down on as something that is wrong (Parent #9).

Finally, Alumnus #13 stated that:

> [We should] take a positive view, literally pro-life in the sense that based on our beliefs on creation and the image of God and so on that life is always valuable and that Christians are in favor of protecting life at both ends of the spectrum and all the way through. So I think that the [college] should take a stance against abortion (Alumnus #13).

One faculty member and two board members disagreed, however. These three interviewees believed that abortion is a social and political issue, and therefore an evangelical Christian college should refrain from taking a stand. Abortion is a choice between a woman and her doctor, and the college should not infringe upon it. Faculty #8 stated:

> I don't think I would support a broad position on either account. I know I wouldn't on the social issue in general . . . So, no I would say that an evangelical Christian college should not define itself by its standing for positions against [abortions] (Faculty #8).

Board member #15 went further, defining abortion as a "non-issue" for the evangelical Christian college:

> I think that a fetus becomes a human being when it has the breath of life and I think that [abortion] is a choice between a woman and her doctor and that the state should not infringe upon it nor should the institution. Q: SO AN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE SHOULD GRANT THAT FREEDOM? I think that it is not an issue--a non-issue with the institution (Board member #15).

Sharing the opinion that the College should refrain from a formal position on abortion, Board member #16 cited the political nature of the issue and held that it is inappropriate for the evangelical Christian college to take an official stand:

> I don't think, politically, the institution can take the Miss America stand. I don't think we should block people out that have had an abortion from admission. And you know . . . redemption is basically sloppy when you get right down to it because you've got to have the latitude of grace and it

> means you take chances. So in this case this institution does not take a political stand on it. If Gary Bauer forced Spring Arbor College and the president to come out in terms of its platform politically, then I would say no (Board member #16).

*Alcohol and Tobacco Use*. Thirteen of the 16 interviewees indicated that they believe an evangelical Christian college should prohibit the use of alcohol and tobacco. All seven of the groups in the study are represented in this opinion. While acknowledging the Bible does not specifically prohibit the use of these substances, these interviewees cited the biblical principles of good health and positive mentoring as reasons for this prohibition. An alcohol and tobacco-free lifestyle was equated with a healthy body, a healthy witness and a healthy community. A move away from these traditional policies was seen as a move in the wrong direction and inconsistent with what an evangelical Christian college should be. Faculty #7 is typical:

> I think we should have a statement that says that alcohol and tobacco are prohibited for a variety of reasons. First of all [possession] and consumption of alcohol is against the law for people under a particular age. Q: HOW ABOUT IF THEY ARE OF AGE? If they are living in a community like the dormitory I don't have any qualms at all about saying you cannot do that here. This is a community in which we accept certain norms. Every community that you belong to in life you're going to accept certain norms (Faculty #7).

Staff #3 agreed and emphasized the obligation to be a good example to others and the responsibility to manage one's personal health:

> Alcohol and cigarettes are a drug. And each of them is a relatively powerful drug. And although I find nothing in scripture saying that a Christian should not touch alcohol ever, I find plenty in scripture talking about my responsibility to be a good example to others, especially those outside the faith or new to the faith or young people who may be influenced by my behavior . . . You know the idea of a mature believer who understands their role in shaping young lives, that's what makes it

> possible for me to say scripture doesn't prohibit me from drinking but I think it's right for a Christian college to prohibit that. And smoking, I think that's a no-brainer. It's dumb and it kills you (Staff #3).

Pastor #4, likewise encouraged the rule against alcohol and tobacco use and indicated that he would be "very disappointed" if an evangelical Christian college stepped away from this community expectation:

> I think any Christian college certainly has a right to have that kind of standard. And I would personally encourage it. Q: IF AN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE STEPPED AWAY FROM THAT STANDARD WHAT WOULD YOUR REACTION BE? I would be very disappointed (Pastor #4).

An alumnus added that stepping away from this standard would have negative consequences over time:

> I don't believe that [alcohol and tobacco use] is a matter, an absolute matter of whether a person is a Christian or not. I do believe that as an evangelical Christian community and one in our particular denominational tradition that we ought to maintain a position on the prohibition of the use of alcohol and tobacco while that person is part of the college community. Q: WHOULD YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE IF AN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE STEPPED ASIDE FROM THAT ISSUE AND NO LONGER CONSIDERED IT TO BE PART OF ITS DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY? I would think that would be a move in the wrong direction. That would have negative consequences over time (Alumnus #13).

Finally, Student #14 indicated that even though alcohol use is not intrinsically wrong, it can have negative social and spiritual consequences and should, therefore, be prohibited. Likewise, a rule against tobacco use is appropriate because of it's negative impact on one's health:

> I don't believe that alcohol in itself is wrong, but the problems it causes, drunk driving, alcoholism. It doesn't really seem to do anything good for anybody. So, people may choose to drink, but it's not a choice that I personally embrace and I don't believe a college should either because it doesn't encourage a spiritual walk or a Christian life. As far as tobacco,

it's addictive and it's bad for you, so I would just say no for that (Student #14).

Faculty #8, Parent #11 and Board member #15 disagreed. They contended that because the Bible does not specifically condemn the use of alcohol and tobacco and that the evangelical Christian college can likewise remain open on the issue. For these interviewees, the words evangelical Christian college are not necessarily synonymous with an alcohol- or tobacco-free community. Every college that claims to be evangelical has the freedom to accept or reject these standards. Concurring with this position, Faculty #8 stated:

> The use of tobacco is one that is a common popular evangelical Christian college no-no . . . That's not a scriptural mandate. It's a cultural mandate. Drunkenness, however, on the flip side of the coin, could be interpreted as a biblical mandate. Not the use of alcohol, but certainly the misuse of alcohol, the abuse of it. And yet, culturally, many of the evangelical Christian colleges will support an abstinence of the use of alcohol . . . I suspect there are a couple reasons for that. Some of it is again, sensitivity to the culture and/or to the church that has either a support or affiliate relationship. I think there are some other significant reasons besides those two and that it's just good, healthful living when you bring people together in a fairly close environment. And so it boils down to respect for people's rights. I think I've made myself clear in terms of what I think justifies institutions taking positions. I don't think the term evangelical Christian College should allow a blanket list of things you don't do. Q: I HEAR YOU SAYING THAT YOU DON'T THINK THE "NO-NOS" SHOULD BE PART OF THE DEFINITION OF AN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE? Correct. Q: THAT THERE SHOULD BE MORE FREEDOM WITHIN THE DEFINITION TO STEP OUTSIDE OF THOSE SOCIAL RESTRICTIONS? Yes. Each institution that claims this uses that freedom all within the context of students it works with. Q: THAT FREEDOM WOULD NOT PRECLUDE ONE FROM BEING DEFINED AS EVANGELICAL? That's correct. That's correct. We can easily point out institutions that differ on a number of those issues who fall into even the accepted camp of evangelical Christian for lots of us (Faculty #8).

Parent #11 saw good reasons why a college would have some restrictions against alcohol and tobacco use but believed that rules against the same are not absolutely necessary to the definition of an evangelical Christian college:

> Actually, with all the data on tobacco now, I would think somebody who smokes should not be a faculty member, not for any spiritual reasons but because they can't possibly look at what we know about smoking and be smart enough to teach at any college [laughter]. I think those are matters of personal conviction. I don't want to see smoking and drinking in the dorms. Q: RULE AGAINST? I don't know. I don't know. Q: IF AN INSTITUTION USING THE TITLE EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE WERE TO NOT HAVE A RULE AGAINST ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO USE OFF CAMPUS WOULD YOU STILL FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH THAT INSTITUTION? I think I could still feel comfortable. Q: SO THEY HAVEN'T COMPROMISED THEIR DEFINITION? I don't think so (Parent #11).

Finally, Board member #15 indicated that, aside from understanding the tradition of the church, an evangelical Christian college does not need to take any specific position on alcohol or tobacco. It is not viewed as an important issue or central to one's relationship with Christ:

> I just don't think that taking a position on that issue [is important]. Traditionally, given my church, I understand the position [but] I don't think it's a central issue to your relationship with Jesus Christ (Board member #15).

*Gambling.* Fourteen of the 16 interviewees, representing all seven groups of the study, indicated that an evangelical Christian college should have rules against gambling. Gambling was considered to be against biblical principles. It was viewed as an addictive behavior. Its premise of winning great gain with little effort was considered contrary to the work ethic expected of an evangelical community. Staff #3 spoke to the issue of biblical principles:

> Scripture doesn't say a whole lot about gambling but it does talk about the evils of gambling. So to me that's a little easier issue than smoking even. I mean, to me that's a lot simpler issue because scripture does speak against gambling (Staff #3).

A student added that gambling is not consistent with a scriptural work ethic. It is resting on fate and luck rather than hard work and God's corresponding reward.

> I don't agree with gambling because I think it is trying to get something for nothing and God always shows us through His Word that He wants us to work hard for the things that we get. With gambling, it's more like trusting in your own abilities or just trusting in luck or fate or whatever. It's not trusting in what God is capable of giving you. I think, obviously if you buy a fireman's raffle ticket or something like that that I don't see harm in those types of things. But, again, I think it gets abused too easily. And you just see people pouring away their life savings and destroying their families just through this tool that the devil uses to pull them down (Student #5).

Pastor #10 concurred and supported a prohibition against gambling because it contravenes an appropriate work ethic with the temptation of great gain for little effort:

> I think there should be a prohibition. Gambling should not be allowed, certainly, on campus and it should be discouraged off-campus. I think it also offers an opportunity for teaching the immorality of gambling. I think it sort of contravenes the whole work ethic of a workman being worthy of his hire. I think it is deceitful in that it dangles, as possible, great gain for little effort when in fact the statistics show that there is one percent of people that actually make any money gambling. So I think it is an opportunity for the school, in a positive way, to say there is a better way (Pastor #10).

Another student summarized succinctly:

> I believe it is wrong. It's addictive. You're wasting your money and getting nothing in return. The odds of winning are very slim. It's getting something for nothing and I don't think God would approve (Student #14).

Faculty #8 and Board member #15 did not agree with a rule against gambling. Gambling was perceived as a social and cultural phenomenon and not

a matter of biblical significance. Board member #15 stated: "I think it is a non-issue. I think it is a personal issue between a person and God." Faculty #8 elaborated and stated that it is difficult to make a statement as to what social behaviors are appropriate for all Christian colleges. Such behavior expectations and rules are considered to be culturally oriented and not biblical mandates:

> First of all, I'll say right up front I think it would be very difficult for me to make a statement regarding all evangelical Christian colleges as it relates to specific social behaviors and living behaviors. I combine those two. Because I think so many of those are culturally oriented activities rather than necessarily biblical mandates (Faculty #8).

*Dancing.* Even though Spring Arbor College still has specific rules against social dancing (as do many evangelical Christian colleges), there seems to be limited support for this policy. Only three of the 16 interviewees, representing only the staff, pastors and board members in the study, supported a rule against social dancing. And even in these cases, support was qualified. Strong concerns over dancing did not surface during the course of the interviews. Examples of the three interviewees who believed that an evangelical Christian college should have a policy against dancing are as follows. First, Staff #3 indicated that, while personally having no problem with dancing, the danger exists for this issue to become a slippery slope to other inappropriate behaviors:

> Well, the old slippery slope. Personally, I'm no dancer. I don't have a problem with it. But I can understand why a Christian college might want to take a stand and the reason is musical styles and dancing and the hormonal level of 17 and 21-year olds can be a bad mix. So, I don't think there is anything biblically overarching that would make a Christian college ban dancing. But I can see how thoughtful evangelicals running a Christian college would come to that conclusion (Staff #3).

Pastor #4 indicated that it is the definition of dancing that needs to be addressed. Some forms of dancing were not considered inappropriate, but he still expressed concern for dancing that is "sensual with sexual connotations":

> So there are some forms of dancing that don't bother me. I think that I grew up in a church where it taught against dancing. It taught against a lot of stuff--going to the bowling alley, you know, and all sorts of things--the theater. But I think there are forms of dance that are certainly appropriate. I've seen forms of dance that have been very useful in worship, for example, interpretive dance. So I think the word dance is one of those political words that holds a lot of emotion and we have to just define it. OK are we going to have dancing on the campus of Spring Arbor College? I would say OK what kind of dancing? I guess the kind of dancing that I am saying is wrong is the holding of a woman up close where there are sensual or sexual connotations to it. Those kinds of dance are obviously out of context for the Christian (Pastor #4).

Alumnus #13 agreed with this pastor's position on the different kinds of dance and added that the evangelical Christian college needed to avoid legalism on this issue but needed to avoid a policy of "anything goes":

> That's a difficult one because of the different kinds of dancing, the changing values and so on. I really haven't made up my mind on that. I see the values of maintaining a prohibition on social dancing. On the other hand, I don't see any problem with square dancing and some other types of dances that are not objectionable. I'm really kind of undecided on that issue. I think probably if I were working with a committee to decide a policy on that I would try to steer some kind of a course that would avoid legalism on the one hand and avoid anything goes on the other (Alumnus #13).

Student #14 and Board member #16 were examples of the other 13 interviewees in the study who did not see it necessary for an evangelical Christian college to have a rule against dancing. Student #14 commented:

> Dancing, well, I don't think dancing is wrong at all. I think, especially in some churches, it's a way to express when you're worshipping and it's a fun activity for a lot of people. It's just a way to go out and have fun. I

> know that the school doesn't like it, they don't allow it, but I don't have any problem with it (Student #14).

Board member #16 added, with a lighthearted spirit of generational self-deprecation: "I think the dancing question is a cultural phenomenon . . . I think this is more cultural than it is moral. That's just the viewpoint of an old man who never danced and wishes he had." Dancing is thus viewed as more of a cultural issue than a moral one and therefore need not be critical to the definition of an evangelical Christian college.

*Theme #6: Integration of faith and learning.*

While this distinction was not predicted by the literature review, and therefore, no question specifically probed this issue, eight of the 16 interviewees, representing five of the seven groups represented in the study, did mention the integration of faith and learning as being central to the definition of an evangelical Christian college. It should be noted that they did so without being prompted by leading questions. Interviewees repeatedly used language such as "Jesus Christ as our perspective for learning," "Jesus Christ as a perspective for study," "integration of faith and learning," and "each academic field ought to be impacted by Christianity," to describe an evangelical Christian college. The two groups that did not mention this distinction in their opening comments were pastors and parents. No negative or dissenting statements were made regarding this distinction.

Two faculty members and one board member were examples of those who maintained that the evangelical Christian college should be characterized by a pervasive ethos that integrates Christian values into every academic field and every area of the college community. There should be multiple connections to the Christian worldview found throughout the curriculum. Dialogue and actions within the community should reflect "Jesus Christ as the perspective for learning." Faculty #1 said an evangelical Christian college is different from other colleges because:

> Evangelical Christianity ought to have expression in each of the academic fields and each academic field ought to be impacted by Christianity to some extent . . . I think that there should be relationships to one's Christianity found throughout the curriculum . . . Jesus Christ is our perspective for learning (Faculty #1).

Another faculty member agreed and added that there must be a pervasive integration of Christianity into all academic disciplines as well as all corresponding outcomes and actions. She said:

> We are a college first of all, because we study the types of things that you study in college. In particular, we focus on the liberal arts and professions that have some basis in the liberal arts and we take our study very seriously. We're a Christian college because we're doing the studying through the perspective of Jesus Christ, as a perspective for learning . . . So we're thinking about what it means to be a Christian in pursuit of a study of whatever our discipline is. Finally, as an evangelical Christian college, our actions are going to be different as a result of our serious study with Jesus Christ as a perspective for that study (Faculty #7).

Alumnus #13 agreed and stated:

> So my view essentially would be this is a college that has an explicit, firm, Christian commitment as understood within the evangelical tradition and that it attempts to build that into curriculum and into the ethos of student life and corporate community including faculty and so on of the institution. Q: HOW IS AN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE DIFFERENT

> FROM OTHER COLLEGES? If it is really an evangelical Christian college it will seek to reflect Christian values at every level of the institution. It will seek to help students understand this commitment and, if they aren't believers in Christ, to come to the personal faith in Christ and to grow in that. And it will have a view that all truth is God's truth and that that provides us the basis, the Christian perspective for dealing with the full range of issues so that the Christian can and should investigate all of knowledge and try to see how they relate to the Christian perspective and the Christian world view (Alumnus #13).

Staff #2, Board member #16 and Board member #15 agreed and added that the integration of faith and learning is a cornerstone to the mission of an evangelical Christian college. The college should investigate all knowledge with this paradigm and seek to relate all intellectual pursuits with a vibrant Christian perspective. Staff #2 responded to the question: "What does Evangelical Christian College mean to you*?*", by stating:

> Evangelical Christian college would mean to me a college that is affiliated in some way with an evangelical perspective . . . that is grounded in evangelical Christianity . . . We can use intellectual pursuits and remain fundamental in our stance with Christianity. So it's a blend of trying to integrate rational, intellectual pursuits with a vibrant Christian perspective (Staff #2).

Board member #16 added to this by emphasizing that evangelical Christian "speaks multiples with reference to the issues of faith and learning, reason and revelation, and discovered truth." Board member #15 emphasized that this integration is mission-driven for the evangelical Christian college. She said:

> We have a mission-driven responsibility to deal with the whole student, not just academically, but we have a responsibility to deal with the person, the student's spiritual life and his or her academic life. And I don't think that is a stated mission of secular colleges (Board member #15).

*Summary of Qualitative Data*

The responses to interview questions confirmed the assumptions of the literature review. The four trigger issues: 1) what one believes about the Bible; 2) what one believes about Jesus Christ; 3) what one believes about salvation; and 4) what one believes about evangelism, all surfaced as central to the definition to an evangelical Christian college.

All 16 interviewees in the study affirmed the centrality of salvation through Jesus Christ as critical to the definition of an evangelical Christian college. In these statements, there is a repeated contention that an evangelical Christian college means an institution that stands for a concept of salvation defined as a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (Staff #2 and Faculty #7). Furthermore, an evangelical Christian college means an institution that stands for the exclusivity of salvation through Jesus Christ alone. Jesus is the only way (Student #14 and Faculty #7). It is Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection and his atonement for sin that provides humanity with the means to salvation, and an evangelical Christian college is expected to stand on these orthodox principles without exception (Alumnus #13, Staff #3 and Parent #9). Such positions are described as being true to the conservative and fundamental facets of the faith and foundational to an evangelical worldview. There were no dissenting views regarding the primacy of salvation within the definition of an evangelical Christian college.

All 16 interviewees also mentioned the importance of evangelism to the definition of an evangelical Christian college. The priority on evangelism was

viewed as a "bottom line" responsibility of an evangelical Christian College (Pastor #10). Outreach, apologetics, and the sharing of the gospel message were considered essential. Employees and students alike were thought to have the duty of working to "change the world" and "present the claims of Christ" (Faculty #8). The higher motive of an evangelical Christian college is to change the world through evangelism (Staff #3). The true purpose of the college is to state the good news in a compelling and convincing way to students, and the college is not considered evangelical if evangelism is not central to its mission (Parent #11). Again, there were no dissenting remarks about this being important to the definition of an evangelical Christian college.

Likewise, all 16 interviewees make reference to the centrality of Jesus as integral to the definition of an evangelical Christian college. Interviewees expressed statements that reflected the primary role that Jesus Christ and his teachings play in the mission of the institution. Campus life should revolve around faith in Christ and reflect Christian beliefs (Student #5 and Student #14). All faculty, staff and students should consider Jesus Christ their model and strive to live like him. Spring Arbor College was founded on this belief in Jesus Christ and we should "make no excuses for what we believe" (Student #14). All 16 interviewees acknowledged and supported the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. More specifically, the teachings of Jesus Christ, his identity as the son of God, his historically validated life of 33 years, and his sacrificial death on the cross and his atonement for sin were viewed as absolutely central to the definition of an evangelical Christian college (Pastor #4). There were, however,

two outlying opinions regarding the virgin birth and miracles of Jesus. Here, two interviewees (Board member #15 and Faculty #8) contended that the evangelical Christian college would not compromise its definition if it remained open to other explanations regarding the miracles and virgin birth.

Again, all 16 interviewees affirmed the centrality of the Bible as critical to what an evangelical college is. Emphasis is placed on the importance of an evangelical Christian college remaining fundamental in its stance on the Bible. A high view of scripture, which includes belief in its infallibility, ultimate authority, truth and centrality, was considered a fundamental facet of the evangelical faith (Staff #3). It is the unerring witness to Jesus Christ. It is considered a trustworthy record of God's revelation to humanity. It is considered completely truthful in all that it affirms. It should be noted, however, that many of the interviewees did not equate this complete truthfulness with inerrancy (Pastor #4 and Pastor #10). The Bible is unerring as it conveys the truth of God, but it should not be considered an "academic book" on matters such as mathematics, science, etc. (Faculty #7). It is not essential for an evangelical Christian college to adhere to a rigid position of inerrancy, since such a position is not considered intellectually honest (Pastor #10).

In addition to supporting the four theological trigger issues referenced in the literature review, interviewees also confirmed the saliency of specific lifestyle expectations (a unique social and behavioral code) as part of an evangelical Christian college. This, however, was the one item that drew dissent from some within the study. No other issues elicited a critical or dissenting response. It

must, therefore, be noted that there appeared to be strong feelings on both the pro and con sides of the issue of lifestyle, rules and behavioral expectations. Most (13 out of the 16 interviewees) held that rules governing alcohol, tobacco, sexual behavior, gambling and abortion were key to the very definition of an evangelical Christian college. They held strong and even aggressive views supporting clear lifestyle policies and standards. There was even the argument that Christian colleges that do not continue to take a strong stance on these issues are not evangelical (Parent #9). Others reacted negatively and contended that the focus on an outward code of conduct with rigid rules and policies was antithetical to the very goals of Christian higher education (Faculty #8 and Board member #15). Board members #15 and #16, along with Faculty #8, agreed that the issue of abortion is either a political or social discussion upon which the evangelical Christian college should remain neutral. The issue of social dancing was the one area where the reverse proportions are true. Here, only 3 interviewees (Pastor #4, Staff #3 and Alumnus #13) expressed specific reservations concerning dancing and in each case they held relatively moderate views. The other 13 interviewees indicated that dancing was either a positive thing or a non-issue.

Finally, a central issue that was not predicted by the literature review surfaced in the interviewee responses. Eight interviewees, representing five of the seven groups relevant to this study, repeatedly referenced the integration of faith and learning. Language such as "Jesus Christ as our perspective for learning," "Jesus Christ as a perspective for study," and "integration of faith and

learning" was repeatedly used to describe an evangelical Christian college. All disciplines should be grounded in Jesus Christ as a perspective for learning. This was considered a cornerstone to what an evangelical Christian college is and should be (Faculty #1, Alumnus #13). All inquiry and learning is to be done within this context. All faculty are to be dedicated to the integration of faith and learning so that all classes address issues from a Christian perspective (Faculty #7). The two groups that did not voice an affirmation of this distinction were pastors and parents, but no dissenting comments were expressed.

## Section II: Quantitative Data

The presentation of quantitative data is as follows. First, is a review of the descriptive data relevant to the seven constituent groups involved in the study. Second, there is a review of the similarities between constituent groups as derived from the ANOVA. And third, there is a review of the differences between these groups using the same statistical analysis.

### *Descriptive Data*

As stated earlier, the seven constituent groups represented in this study are students, pastors, parents, alumni, faculty, Board members, and staff. Chapter three defined these populations, their size and the data collection methods for each of these constituent groups. The following represents a review of these group definitions as well as an overview of the descriptive data gleaned form the survey and as shown in Table 3.

- Students were defined as all students enrolled in the traditional campus program during the fall semester of the 2000-2001 academic year. The student population size was 1050. The survey instrument was administered to all 1050. The number (*n*) that responded to the survey was 600, or 57.5% of the total population students. Approximately 63% of the respondents were male with 37% being female. Ninety percent of the respondents reported being between the ages of 18 to 22. Over 91% were Caucasian with no other ethnic groups reporting over 3%. Nearly 31% of the respondents were freshmen, 22 % were sophomores, 20% were juniors, and 21% were graduate students. Ninety-nine percent of the students indicated that they shared Christian faith and 80% reported that they were evangelical. About 20% of the students identified as being Free Methodist.
- Pastors were defined as all pastors in the four sponsoring Free Methodist conferences for Spring Arbor College. These conferences are the Southern Michigan Conference, the East Michigan Conference, the North Michigan Conference, and the Ohio Conference. The population size for pastors was 273. The survey instrument was administered to all 273. The number (*n*) responding to the survey equaled 148, or 54.6% of the total population of pastors. Eighty-seven percent of the pastors who responded were male with 13% being female. Eighty-nine percent reported being 31 years of age or older. Ninety-six percent were Caucasian. All of these pastors (100%) indicated that they shared Christian faith and that they were evangelical.

- Faculty was defined as all faculty members employed in the traditional campus program of Spring Arbor College. The population size for faculty was 97. The survey was administered to all 97. The number (*n*) that responded to the survey equaled 77, or 79.4% of the total population of faculty. Approximately 47% of the faculty were female and 53% were male. Ninety-five percent were Caucasian. Seventy-five percent were between the ages of 41 and 60. All (100%) indicated they share Christian faith and 93.5% said they were evangelical.
- Staff was defined as all non-teaching employees of Spring Arbor College. This includes executive level administration (the president and his cabinet) and all other support staff. The population size for staff was 164. The number (*n*) that responded to the survey equaled 102 or 62% of the total population of staff. Sixty-seven percent of the staff respondents were female and 33% were male. Ninety-four percent reported being Caucasian. Thirty-eight percent were between the ages of 18 and 40 and 58% were between 41 and 60 years of age. Ninety-nine percent indicated they were Christians and 96% indicated they were evangelical.
- The Board of Trustees was defined as all members of the Board of Trustees of Spring Arbor College. This population total was 34. The number (*n*) that responded to the survey equaled 28, or 82.35% of the total population of the Board of Trustees. Eleven percent of the respondents were female and 89% were male. Ninety-three percent reported being Caucasian. Ninety-six percent were over 41 years of age with 39% between 41 and 60 years of age

and 57% indicated that they were 61 years of age or older. Ninety-six percent indicated that they shared the Christian faith as well as 96% indicating that they were evangelical.

- Alumni were defined as all members of the Alumni Board of the College. This population size is 27. The number (*n*) that responded to the survey was 34, or 125 % of the total population of the alumni. Note: The reason the *n* exceeded the population size for the alumni group is that some participants who were sent surveys because of their primary status of being parents, faculty, staff, Board, or pastors were also alumni. In limited cases such individuals identified themselves as alumni on the survey instrument rather than what the researcher considered to be their primary status. Thirty percent of those responding were female with 70% being male. Forty-one percent were 18 to 40 years of age and 58% reported being older that 41. Ninety-four percent were Caucasian. Sixty-one percent indicated they shared the Christian faith with the same percentage indicating they were evangelical.
- Parents were defined as all members of the Parents Council of the College. This population size was 32. The survey was administered to all 32. The number (*n*) that responded to the survey was 23, or 71.9% of the total population of parents. Sixty-one percent were female and 49% were male. Ninety-one percent were between the ages of 41 and 60. Ninety-six percent reported being Caucasian. Eighty-seven percent said they were Christian with the same percentage claiming to be evangelical.

Table 3
Descriptive Data/Quantitative Respondents

| Variables | Students | | Alunmi * | | Parents * | | Pastors | | Board | | Faculty | | Staff | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| RESPONSES | 600 | | 34 | | 23 | | 148 | | 28 | | 77 | | 102 | |
| GENDER | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Female | 378 | 63% | 10 | 30% | 14 | 61% | 19 | 13% | 3 | 11% | 36 | 47% | 68 | 67% |
| Male | 219 | 37% | 23 | 70% | 9 | 39% | 128 | 87% | 25 | 89% | 41 | 53% | 34 | 33% |
| ETHNICITY | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| African-Amer | 18 | 3% | 1 | 3% | 0 | 0% | 2 | 1% | 1 | 4% | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% |
| Caucasian | 543 | 91% | 31 | 94% | 22 | 96% | 142 | 96% | 26 | 93% | 73 | 95% | 94 | 94% |
| Asian-Amer | 3 | 1% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% |
| International | 8 | 1% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Native Amer | 2 | 0% | 1 | 3% | 0 | 0% | 2 | 1% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% |
| Hispanic | 10 | 2% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1% | 1 | 4% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Other | 10 | 2% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 4% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1% | 3 | 3% |
| CHRISTIAN | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 586 | 98% | 21 | 100% | 20 | 100% | 148 | 100% | 27 | 96% | 77 | 100% | 101 | 100% |
| No | 9 | 2% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 4% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| EVANGELICAL | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 475 | 86% | 20 | 95% | 20 | 100% | 148 | 100% | 27 | 96% | 72 | 94% | 98 | 100% |
| No | 76 | 14% | 1 | 5% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 4% | 5 | 6% | 0 | 0% |
| AGE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18-22 | 541 | 90% | 2 | 6% | 0 | 0% | 3 | 2% | 1 | 4% | 0 | 0% | 3 | 3% |
| 23-30 | 30 | 5% | 5 | 15% | 0 | 0% | 12 | 8% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 12 | 12% |
| 31-40 | 20 | 3% | 7 | 21% | 2 | 9% | 42 | 29% | 0 | 0% | 12 | 16% | 24 | 24% |
| 41-50 | 7 | 1% | 9 | 26% | 15 | 65% | 33 | 22% | 4 | 14% | 36 | 47% | 33 | 32% |
| 51-60 | 2 | 0% | 3 | 9% | 6 | 26% | 33 | 22% | 7 | 25% | 21 | 27% | 26 | 25% |
| 60+ | 0 | 0% | 8 | 24% | 0 | 0.0% | 24 | 16% | 16 | 57% | 8 | 10% | 4 | 4% |

* Alumni and Parents refers to the Parents' Council and Alumni Board of Spring Arbor College

*Similarity among constituent groups.*

Theological tenet variables were designed to measure the respondents' commitment to the theology commonly associated with an evangelical Christian college. As stated earlier, these tenets were the inspiration and authority of the Bible; the accuracy of the Bible; the virgin birth; the miracles; death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and salvation through Jesus Christ alone. Table 4 shows the means for each variable within the seven different constituent groups

of the study. For each of these variables the mean response for the seven constituent groups was nearly always greater than 4.0 on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In the case of only one variable (Bible W/O Error) the mean for two of the seven constituent groups was less than 4.0. These two constituent groups were Board of Trustees, who had a mean score of 3.88 on a scale of 1 to 5, and Faculty, who had a mean score of 3.70. Thus, there appeared to be strong agreement across the various constituencies of Spring Arbor College on the basic theological tenets that an evangelical Christian college should support. All seven constituent groups indicated that they generally agreed or strongly agreed with these traditional theological distinctions of evangelical Christianity.

Table 4

Basic tenets of evangelical Christianity Mean responses

| Variable | Students | Alumni | Parents | Pastors | Board | Faculty | Staff |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inspired | 4.08 | 4.74 | 4.85 | 4.94 | 4.43 | 4.43 | 4.63 |
| W/O Error | 4.02 | 4.29 | 4.67 | 4.29 | 3.88 | 3.70 | 4.47 |
| Virgin | 4.84 | 4.78 | 4.98 | 4.89 | 4.72 | 4.59 | 4.73 |
| Miracles | 4.37 | 4.67 | 4.85 | 4.84 | 4.60 | 4.32 | 4.72 |
| Resurrection | 4.56 | 4.72 | 4.72 | 4.92 | 4.65 | 4.66 | 4.81 |
| Salvation | 4.63 | 4.55 | 4.44 | 4.95 | 4.63 | 4.67 | 4.83 |

Note: The mean scores are based on a range of 2 to 10 that was then "halved" to accommodate comparisons on the Likert scale with 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree.

Lifestyle stance variables were designed to measure the respondents' commitment to various lifestyle stances suggested to be central to the definition of an evangelical Christian college. These particular stances dealt with rules

against alcohol use, tobacco use, premarital and extramarital sexual relations, homosexual relations, abortion, social dancing, and gambling. Two additional variables, stemming from the qualitative interviews, measured commitment to social justice and the mandate for evangelism. Each constituent group, except faculty and students, has a mean score of 4.0 or greater (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) on seven of these nine variables. It should be noted that even though the faculty group does score slightly lower than 4.0 on the variables of alcohol use (3.58), tobacco use (3.65) and gambling (3.82), these scores still indicated relatively strong support for the traditional policies and rules associated with these variables. Likewise on the variable of gambling, students had a mean score of 3.94. Therefore, even with these mean scores slightly below 4.0, it is apparent that all of the seven constituent groups generally agree or strongly agree with the traditional rules and policies governing sexuality, abortion, alcohol and tobacco use, and gambling. There was, likewise, strong support for the call for social justice and evangelism.

Dancing is the only lifestyle variable that appeared to lack broad-based support. The mean score for the students on this variable was 2.07. Four of the seven constituent groups (students, alumni, faculty, and staff) had mean scores of 2.97 or below. Two constituent groups (Pastors and Board members) had mean scores of 3.03, and only one constituent group, the parents, demonstrated noted support for this variable, with a mean score of 3.41. This policy, therefore, received the least amount of support from the seven different constituent groups of the College with six of the seven groups indicating that they were neutral or

disagreed with the traditional policies against social dancing. Support for this distinction within the definition of an evangelical Christian college was noticeably weaker than that of other lifestyle distinctives. Table 5 shows the mean score for each of these lifestyle variables as related to each of the seven constituent groups.

Table 5

Life style stances common to definition of evangelical Christian college
Mean responses

| Variable | Students | Alumni | Parents | Pastors | Board | Faculty | Staff |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alcohol | 4.17 | 4.31 | 4.78 | 4.45 | 4.20 | 3.58 | 4.33 |
| Tobacco | 4.20 | 4.10 | 4.61 | 4.43 | 4.35 | 3.65 | 4.48 |
| Dancing | 2.07 | 2.97 | 3.41 | 3.03 | 3.03 | 2.22 | 2.75 |
| Gambling | 3.94 | 4.55 | 4.70 | 4.60 | 4.40 | 3.82 | 4.41 |
| Sex | 4.53 | 4.86 | 5.00 | 4.89 | 4.60 | 4.61 | 4.84 |
| Homosexual | 4.47 | 4.76 | 4.96 | 4.89 | 4.80 | 4.42 | 4.72 |
| Abortion | 4.46 | 4.75 | 5.00 | 4.83 | 4.37 | 4.09 | 4.82 |
| Justice | 4.22 | 4.48 | 4.48 | 4.64 | 4.33 | 4.56 | 4.48 |
| Evangelism | 4.23 | 4.59 | 4.78 | 4.84 | 4.52 | 4.40 | 4.64 |

Note: The mean scores are based on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree.

*Differences among constituent groups.*

An ANOVA was performed on each of the seven theological-tenet variables to determine if there were significant differences among the seven constituent groups of the study. Table 6 shows the results, along with the means and standard deviations for each group on each theological tenet variable. All of the ANOVA tests showed a significant difference ($p<0.001$) among the means of the seven constituent groups for each of the theological tenet variables. Table 7

shows the significant group contrasts for each variable. On almost every theological tenet variable, groups 1 (students), and 6 (faculty) have means that are significantly lower than the means of groups 3 (parents), 4 (pastors) and 7 (staff). On the variable of salvation, groups 1 (students), 2 (alumni), 3 (parents), and 6 (faculty) had significantly smaller means than the mean score of group 4 (pastors).

Table 6

Basic Tenets of Evangelical Christianity
Means and Standard Deviations for each group on each variable and results of ANOVAs

| | Students | | Alumni | | Parents | | Pastors | | Board | | Faculty | | Staff | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | F |
| Inspired | 8.2 | 1.9 | 9.5 | 1.2 | 9.7 | 0.8 | 9.8 | 0.7 | 8.9 | 2.3 | 8.9 | 1.8 | 9.3 | 1.3 | 25.156** |
| W/O Error | 8.0 | 2.2 | 8.6 | 2.0 | 9.3 | 1.3 | 8.6 | 2.2 | 7.8 | 2.1 | 7.4 | 2.3 | 8.9 | 1.8 | 6.373** |
| Virgin | 9.1 | 1.5 | 9.6 | 1.1 | 9.9 | 0.2 | 9.8 | 0.9 | 9.4 | 1.7 | 9.2 | 1.5 | 9.5 | 1.2 | 7.628** |
| Miracles | 8.7 | 1.7 | 9.3 | 1.3 | 9.7 | 0.7 | 9.7 | 1.0 | 9.2 | 1.9 | 8.6 | 1.8 | 9.5 | 1.2 | 10.592** |
| Resurrection | 9.1 | 1.5 | 9.5 | 1.3 | 9.4 | 1.4 | 9.8 | 0.6 | 9.3 | 1.9 | 9.3 | 1.5 | 9.6 | 1.0 | 6.457** |
| Salvation | 9.3 | 1.5 | 9.1 | 2.2 | 8.9 | 2.8 | 9.9 | 0.5 | 9.3 | 1.8 | 9.3 | 1.4 | 9.7 | 1.0 | 5.484** |

Note A: Means and standard deviations were computed to the nearest thousandth for the ANOVA but are ** $p<0.001$, reported here rounded off to the nearest tenth.
Note B: For consistency in comparisons of theological tenet means with lifestyle means on the same scale of 1 to 5 these mean scores were "halved" as is seen in Table 4.

Table 7

Significant Group Contrasts at p<0.001

| Variable | Constituent Groups | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inspired | 1 < 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 | 6 < 4 | 5 < 4 | |
| W/O Error | 6 < 3, 4, and 7 | 1 < 3, 4, and 7 | | |
| Virgin | 1 < 3, 4, and 7 | 6 < 4 | | |
| Miracles | 6 < 3, 4, and 7 | 1 < 3, 4, and 7 | | |
| Resurrection | 1 < 4 and 7 | | | |
| Salvation | 3 < 4 | 2 < 4 | 1 < 4 | 6 < 4 |

Note: Groups are identified as follows: 1 (Students), 2 (alumni), 3 (parents), 4 (pastors), 5 (board), 6 (faculty), 7 (staff)

An ANOVA was also performed on each of the nine lifestyle stance variables to see if there were significant differences among the seven constituent groups in the study. Table 8 shows the results of these ANOVAs, along with the means and standard deviations for each constituent group on each lifestyle stance variable. All of these tests showed significant differences ($p<0.001$) among the seven groups for each of the eight variables. Table 9 shows the significant group contrasts for each lifestyle stance variable. On almost every variable, groups 1 (students), and 6 (faculty) had means that were significantly lower than the means of groups 3 (parents) and 4 (pastors). It should be noted that on the variable of social justice, the means for group 6 (faculty) along with

group 4 (pastors) and group 7 (staff) were significantly greater than group 1 (students).

Table 8

Life Style Stances common to Conservative Christians
Means and Standard Deviations for each group for each variable and results of ANOVAs

| | Students | | Alumni | | Parents | | Pastors | | Board | | Faculty | | Staff | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | F |
| Alcohol | 4.2 | 1.0 | 4.3 | 0.9 | 4.8 | 0.5 | 4.4 | 0.7 | 4.2 | 1.0 | 3.6 | 1.2 | 4.3 | 0.9 | 8.734** |
| Tobacco | 4.2 | 1.0 | 4.1 | 1.2 | 4.6 | 0.7 | 4.4 | 0.8 | 4.3 | 1.1 | 3.7 | 1.2 | 4.5 | 0.8 | 7.125** |
| Dancing | 2.1 | 1.1 | 3.0 | 1.5 | 3.4 | 1.3 | 3.0 | 1.2 | 3.0 | 1.2 | 2.2 | 1.2 | 2.8 | 1.2 | 22.603** |
| Gambling | 3.9 | 1.1 | 4.6 | 0.6 | 4.7 | 0.6 | 4.6 | 0.6 | 4.4 | 1.1 | 3.8 | 1.3 | 4.4 | 0.9 | 13.345** |
| Sex | 4.5 | 0.9 | 4.9 | 0.4 | 5.0 | 0.0 | 4.9 | 0.4 | 4.6 | 1.1 | 4.6 | 0.8 | 4.8 | 0.4 | 6.962** |
| Homosexual | 4.5 | 0.9 | 4.8 | 0.6 | 4.9 | 0.2 | 4.9 | 0.4 | 4.8 | 0.6 | 4.4 | 0.9 | 4.7 | 0.6 | 7.507** |
| Abortion | 4.5 | 1.0 | 4.8 | 0.5 | 5.0 | 0.0 | 4.8 | 0.5 | 4.4 | 1.2 | 4.1 | 1.2 | 4.8 | 0.5 | 10.188** |
| Justice | 4.2 | 0.9 | 4.5 | 0.8 | 4.5 | 1.0 | 4.6 | 0.7 | 4.3 | 1.2 | 4.6 | 0.6 | 4.5 | 0.8 | 6.392** |
| Evangelism | 4.2 | 0.9 | 4.6 | 0.7 | 4.8 | 0.6 | 4.8 | 0.4 | 4.5 | 0.9 | 4.4 | 0.6 | 4.6 | 0.7 | 13.945** |

Note: Means and standard deviations were computed to the nearest thousandth for the ANOVA analyses but are reported here rounded off to the nearest tenth.
** $p < 0.001$,

Table 9

Significant Group Contrasts at $p<0.001$

| Variable | Constituent Groups | |
|---|---|---|
| Alcohol | 6 < 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 | 1 < 3 and 4 |
| Tobacco | 6 < 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7 | |
| Dancing | 1 < 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 | 6 < 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 |
| Gambling | 6 < 2, 3, 4, and 7 | 1 < 2, 3, 4, and 7 |
| Sex | 1 < 3, 4, and 7 | |
| Homosexual | 6 < 4 | 1 < 3 and 4 |
| Abortion * | 6 < 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 | 1 < 3, 4,and 7 |
| Justice | 1 < 4, 6, and 7 | |
| Evangelism | 1<3, 4, and 7 | 6<4 |

Note: Groups are identified as follows: 1 (Students), 2 (alumni), 3 (parents), 4 (pastors), 5 (board), 6 (faculty), 7 (staff)

*Summary of Quantitative Data Analysis*

For most of the variables in this study, students, and faculty had mean scores that were significantly lower than the means of parents and pastors. This indicates that, on average, students and faculty had less commitment to the basic traditional theological tenets and lifestyle stances than did parents, pastors, Board members, staff and alumni. With regard to commitment to Jesus Christ as the only means to salvation, students, alumni, parents and faculty had significantly less commitment than did pastors. With regard to commitment to social justice, faculty had significantly more commitment than students. It should be noted again, however, that despite these statistical differences, all seven constituent groups generally agreed or strongly agreed with the theological distinctions identified in this study. No constituent group scored lower than 3.70 on any of these theological variables. Likewise, the statistical differences regarding the lifestyle stances existed within the context of all seven groups having mean scores of 3.58 or higher. The one exception, as noted, is the policy against social dancing, where six of the seven constituent groups had mean scores of 3.03 or lower, thus indicating less commitment to and even disagreement with the traditional rules on dancing.

# CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This chapter focuses on the findings, conclusions, recommendations, and limitations relevant to this study. The chapter begins with an overview, including a summary of the research question, literature review, and corresponding methodological assumptions. Next, findings drawn from the qualitative and quantitative data are summarized. Then these findings are discussed and conclusions are offered. Finally, the recommendations as well as the limitations of the study are presented along with final reflections.

## Overview of Study

### *Research Question*

As stated earlier, the purpose of this study was to assess what the words "evangelical Christian" mean to various constituencies when a college uses them as part of its definition. Using Spring Arbor College as a case example, the research question for this study was as follows: What does the distinction "evangelical Christian" mean to the College's relevant stakeholders? More specifically:

- What do the College's personnel (faculty, staff, administration, and board members) understand "evangelical Christian" college to mean?
- What do the College's primary constituency groups (students, parents, pastors) understand "evangelical Christian" college to mean?

- What range of understandings exist between the College's relevant stakeholders regarding the meaning of "evangelical Christian" college?

The assumption of this study was that students, parents, and pastors who choose to affiliate with Spring Arbor might have a specific understanding of "evangelical Christian" college (what this terminology means socially and theologically), while the faculty, staff, administration and board members might or might not share the same definition.

*Summary of Literature Review*

In the review of the literature, four primary definitional themes emerged: 1) the unique authority of the Bible; 2) the orthodox identity of Jesus Christ, i.e. his life, death and resurrection; 3) salvation only through Jesus Christ; and 4) the mandate for evangelism, i.e. mission outreach or proselytizing (Green, Guth Smidt, and Kelstedt, 1996, p. 244; Zimmerman, 1996).

Adherence to these basic tenets seems to be at the core of a definition of evangelical Christianity. As stated in chapter two, Harold Ockenga contended that evangelicals are united by "a common authority (the Bible), a common experience (conversion), a common conviction (that salvation is to be found only in the atoning work of Christ), and a common mission (worldwide evangelism)" (Rosell, 1996, p. 9). David Bebbington (1989, p. 2-14) similarly noted four specific hallmarks of evangelicalism: "*conversionism,* the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of

Christ on the cross." Thus, the literature suggests that there are four basic theological dimensions at the center of evangelical Christian thought. These dimensions address: 1) what one believes about the Bible; 2) what one believes about salvation; 3) what one believes about Jesus Christ, and 4) what one believes about proselytizing or evangelism.

In addition to these central theological themes, the literature review revealed some prevalent social distinctions. Hunter (1983, p. 24) summarized this social component of the evangelical sub-culture: "Next to the importance of 'being saved' is the quest to conform to a rigorous private-sphere morality exclusively oriented around avoiding the sins of worldly amusements." He cited dancing, gambling, and alcohol use as behaviors that evangelicals have traditionally considered unacceptable (Hunter, 1983, p. 40). Green, Guth, Smidt, and Kellstedt highlighted the fact that this conservative social posture continues within today's evangelical population. They identified pornography, abortion, homosexuality, sex education and support for traditional morality as issues that routinely bring out the defining values of conservative evangelicals (Green, Guth, Smidt, and Kellstedt. 1996. p. 75).

In summary, the literature repeatedly affirmed the authority of scripture, the exclusivity of salvation, the divinity of Christ, and the call to evangelism as being central to what an evangelical Christian college is and should be. In addition, there are other prevalent lifestyle stances that have been traditionally associated with the evangelical movement. While these do vary, there is repeated reference to rules and policies governing sexuality, abortion, social

dancing, alcohol and tobacco use, and gambling (Hughes and Adrian, 1997, p. 258).

*Methodological Assumptions*

The methodological design for this research assumed a dominant/less-dominant approach within the context of a qualitative/quantitative model. In this format qualitative interviews were used as a means of identifying salient themes, and a quantitative survey instrument was constructed for the purpose of assessing the relative weight of these themes (Creswell, 1994. p 177-190).

Ontologically, this research sought to identify the *relative constructs* people have regarding what they believe an "evangelical Christian" college is and should be. Epistemologically, this research has been grounded in the assumption that a person's knowledge of the terminology "evangelical Christian" college is likely to be *transactional* in nature. That is, this knowledge is dependent on and reflective of various relationships between the knower (i.e. faculty, staff, students, parents, pastors, alumni and board members) and the known (i.e. the definition of "evangelical Christian" college) (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 105-107).

## Findings

The following is a presentation of findings. Responses are organized under two headings: 1) areas of agreement, and 2) areas of disagreement. Under each of these two headings, and in keeping with the research questions

as previously cited, attention is given to the positions of faculty, staff, board members, pastors, parents, students and alumni, highlighting the similarities and differences between these seven groups. In keeping with the dominant/less-dominant methodology, as described above, these findings first focus on qualitative results and then are followed by a review of the relative quantitative weight of these perceived themes and/or trends.

*Areas of Agreement*

A key finding of this research is that there is substantial agreement between the various different stakeholders of Spring Arbor College concerning the definition of an evangelical Christian college. Both the qualitative and quantitative phases of this study confirmed this agreement. The basic social and theological tenets commonly associated with the evangelical movement were affirmed across "party lines" or, diverse constituencies (stakeholders).

*Qualitative Findings.*

The following is a summary of opinions that were expressed in the qualitative phase of this study that demonstrated such agreement:

- *An evangelical Christian college must maintain that salvation comes only through Jesus Christ.* All 16 of the interviewees agreed that an evangelical Christian college should maintain that the means to salvation is only through Jesus Christ. This exclusive position was considered foundational to an evangelical worldview. It is only through Christ's incarnation, death, atoning

sacrifice, and resurrection that humanity gains salvation. All interviewees considered this to be the basic biblical position and a critical distinction relative to what it means to be an evangelical Christian college.

- *Evangelism is an essential mandate for an evangelical Christian college.* All 16 of the interviewees agreed that the mandate for evangelism is central to the definition of an evangelical Christian college. The faculty, staff, board members and administration of the college should serve as role models of the Christian faith. They should intentionally work to share their faith in both word and deed, with the goal of mentoring others toward conversion. They should be emphasizing this priority to students and at the same time teach these students the responsibility they have to evangelize others. This proselytizing is considered a "bottom line" responsibility of an evangelical Christian college. A college is not considered evangelical if such "sharing of the gospel" is not central to its mission.
- *Jesus Christ is central to the mission of an evangelical Christian college.* All 16 of the interviewees affirmed the historical truth of Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection and his incarnation as the son of God. Standing firm on the deity of Christ was considered the only position that an evangelical Christian college can take. This position on Jesus Christ and his identity was considered the most important doctrine of any for an evangelical Christian college. There was no middle ground on this matter. All but two of the interviewees agreed that the virgin birth and the miracles of Jesus were critical to the story of Jesus and, therefore, central to the definition of what it

means to be an evangelical Christian college. The miracles and virgin birth were considered to be important affirmations of the validity of Christ's true identity.

- *An evangelical Christian college must affirm the Bible as the only word of God.* All of the interviewees agreed that an evangelical Christian college should maintain that the Bible is the only authoritative word of God. The Bible was considered the trustworthy and ultimate record of God's revelation to humanity, completely truthful in all it affirms. This position, however, was not considered synonymous with inerrancy. None of the interviewees advocated this position. The Bible was considered to be unerring in the truth it conveys but not an "academic book" on matters of math and science, etc. It was not considered necessary for an evangelical Christian college to subscribe to the inerrancy position. In fact, to do so was considered intellectually dishonest.
- *An evangelical Christian college should have rules against alcohol and tobacco use, and gambling.* Thirteen of the 16 interviewees agreed that if a college claims to be evangelical it should have policies prohibiting the use of alcohol and tobacco. Principles of good health, Christian responsibility, and positive role-modeling were cited as reasons for such prohibitions. Fourteen of the 16 interviewees indicated that an evangelical Christian college should have rules against gambling. A move away from these traditional community standards was viewed as a move in the wrong direction and inconsistent with what an evangelical Christian college should be.

- *Premarital, extramarital and homosexual relationships should be prohibited at an evangelical Christian college.* All of the 16 interviewees affirmed the traditional biblical standards of sexual fidelity, i.e. sexual expression should be preserved for marriage. Fourteen of the 16 interviewees indicated that the college should have specific rules governing sexual behavior. It should be noted that in every case proponents of these policies drew a distinction between homosexual orientation and homosexual behavior. All people (heterosexual or homosexual) should be treated with respect and without prejudice. As long as a person agrees to comply with the college's policies prohibiting premarital sex and homosexual conduct, then he or she should not be excluded from the college community.
- *An evangelical Christian college should have a policy against abortion.* Thirteen of the 16 interviewees indicated that the college should take a stand against abortion. These interviewees believed that the unborn fetus is human life and, therefore, should be honored and protected over and above a woman's right to choose. However, the college should respond to those who have had abortions with grace and support. No one espoused dismissing students or refusing admission to students on the basis of abortion.
- *The traditional prohibition against social dancing is no longer a central issue for an evangelical Christian college.* This is the only lifestyle stance that did not receive majority support from the interviewees. In fact, there seemed to be general agreement to the contrary. Even though Spring Arbor College still

has specific rules against social dancing, only three of the 16 interviewees voiced support for this rule. And in these cases, support was qualified. While saying that they didn't have any personal problems with dancing, these three proponents of the traditional policy stated that doing away with the rule could put the college on the "slippery slope" of endorsing sexually provocative environments, etc. The other 13 interviewees, however, agreed that social dancing is a "non-issue" for an evangelical Christian college and that it is just one more form of entertainment. For these interviewees, dancing is more of a cultural issue than a moral one and, therefore, it should not be considered critical for an evangelical Christian college to prohibit social dancing.

*Quantitative Findings:*

In measuring the relative weight of the opinions expressed in the qualitative interviews, the quantitative data further supported the above areas of agreement. The following is a summary of the areas of agreement as demonstrated in the quantitative phase of this study:

- *There was strong commitment to the traditional theological tenets commonly associated with an evangelical Christian college.* As stated in chapter four, commitment to the basic theological tenets was nearly always ranked by all populations of this study as 4.0 or higher on a scale of 1 to 5 (1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree). For the theological tenets of the Bible being the only inspired and authoritative word of God, the virgin birth of Jesus, the miracles of Jesus, Christ's death and resurrection, salvation only through

Jesus Christ, and the mandate for evangelism, all populations of the study had mean scores of 4.0 or higher. The only case where mean scores were below 4.0 was with the theological tenet of "the Bible being without error." Here, both the faculty and the Board scored 3.70 and 3.88 respectively, thus, still demonstrating a clear preference for respecting this theological position (see Table 3).

- *There is strong agreement with most all of the traditional lifestyle stances commonly associated with an evangelical Christian college*. Table (p. 138) shows that, with few exceptions, mean scores were above 4.0 (1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree) for all populations of the study for the lifestyle stances relevant to alcohol and tobacco use, gambling, premarital and extramarital sexual relationships, homosexual relationships, abortion, and social justice. For these variables, the only mean scores below 4.0 were in the area of gambling, where students scored 3.94 and faculty scored 3.82; alcohol use, where faculty scored 3.58; and tobacco use where faculty scored 3.65. Thus, even in the cases where the scores of faculty and students were slightly below 4.0, there was a clear indication of agreement with the traditional lifestyle stances of an evangelical Christian college.
- *There was a noted lack of commitment to the traditional evangelical position on social dancing*. Table 4 (p. 138) shows that this lifestyle stance received the lowest level of support from all seven populations of the study. The mean score for students (2.02) was the lowest. Parents had the highest mean score (3.41). Board members and pastors both scored 3.03, while faculty,

staff and alumni scored 2.22, 2.75 and 2.97, respectively. The quantitative data supported the findings derived from the qualitative interviews. Traditional rules against dancing were not necessarily considered critical to the definition of an evangelical Christian college.

*Areas of Disagreement*

While the qualitative phase of this research demonstrated significant agreement among the interviewees, this agreement was not always unanimous. There were six areas where dissenting views were expressed: 1) the virgin birth and miracles of Jesus; 2) rules governing sexual behavior; 3) policies prohibiting abortion; 4) rules prohibiting the use of alcohol and tobacco; 5) rules prohibiting gambling; and 6) rules against social dancing. These voices of disagreement represented a clear minority (never more than 3 of the 16 interviewees dissenting from the majority opinion), but it is important to highlight that these differing views were almost always held by a faculty member or a member of the board of trustees. Therefore, the dissenting views may represent opinions that could be disproportionately more influential in the formulation of policy and the corresponding direction of the college.

*Qualitative Findings.*

The following is a summary of the quantitative interviews that demonstrated disagreement among the various constituents.

- *There was disagreement concerning the historicity and relative importance of the virgin birth and the miracles of Jesus.* Two interviewees (one faculty member and one board member) believed that an evangelical Christian college would not compromise its definition if it remained open to alternative explanations concerning the virgin birth and the miracles of Jesus. For these two interviewees, the stories of the virgin birth and miracles are "message statements" as much as they are "reality statements." According to these two interviewees, members of the faculty and staff should be permitted to take alternative positions and should not be separated from the community as a result. It was not considered necessary for the college to take a position on these issues. They were not viewed as central to Christianity.
- *Some disagreed concerning whether the college should have rules governing sexual behavior.* While agreeing that premarital, extramarital and homosexual sexual relationships were incompatible with the evangelical Christian lifestyle, two interviewees (one board member and one alumnus) contended that the college should focus on the positive profile of purity of mind and body rather than maintaining a negative list of rules. Further, a proscriptive policy along with punitive consequences for illicit sexual behavior was considered unnecessary and legalistic.
- *Some disagreed concerning whether an evangelical Christian college should have policies against abortion.* Three of the 16 interviewees (one faculty member and two board members) expressed strong opinions that abortion is

a personal choice and/or a political issue, and therefore the college should not intrude with any official policies.

- *Some disagreed concerning whether an evangelical Christian college should have rules against alcohol and tobacco use.* Three interviewees (one board member, one faculty member and one parent) believed it was unnecessary for an evangelical Christian college to have such restrictions. For these participants the college is too "rules-oriented." They felt policies against tobacco and alcohol use should not be a litmus test of a college's evangelical commitment. Such legalism was considered to be antithetical to what a Christian college should be.
- *Gambling was perceived by some to be a "non-issue" and therefore irrelevant to the definition of an evangelical Christian college.* Two interviewees (one board member and one faculty member) claimed that gambling is a personal choice and a "non-issue" for an evangelical college. For these two interviewees, rules against gambling were not biblically warranted and therefore should fall outside the definitional character of the college.
- *Many disagreed with the traditional policy prohibiting social dancing.* Three of the 16 interviewees believed that there should be any rule against dancing. Thirteen of the interviewees maintained that this rule is outdated and unnecessary to the definition of an evangelical Christian college. Even for the three interviewees who voiced some agreement with traditional rules there was only measured support. Those who supported the traditional policies against dancing cited the sexually provocative nature of some forms

of dancing as reasons for some ongoing restrictions. Proponents of change repeatedly indicated that dancing is simply another form of entertainment that is part of our contemporary culture. They did not see any conflict in an evangelical Christian college permitting or promoting such activities.

*Quantitative Findings.*

While the qualitative data raised the question of potential dissent from the traditional theological and social positions of an evangelical Christian college, the quantitative data demonstrated that these dissenting views were not positions held by the majority of the relevant constituent groups. The following is a summary of quantitative findings:

- *The disagreements expressed in quantitative interviews were not positions supported by the majority of the relevant populations of this study.* Proscriptive policies and positions concerning, alcohol and tobacco use, abortion, gambling, premarital, extramarital and homosexual relationships, the authority of scripture, and the miracles and virgin birth of Jesus were supported by all constituent groups (see Tables 3 and 4, pp. 136 and 138).
- *Faculty and students scored significantly lower on many theological tenets and lifestyle stances.* Mean scores were generally high on all scales (except for the stance on social dancing) and there was basic agreement and commitment on almost all theological tenets and lifestyle stances. But students and faculty had a tendency to score significantly lower ($p<0.001$) on

some variables relative to the other populations (see Tables 6 and 7, pp. 139 and 140).

- *The traditional policy against social dancing was not supported by either the quantitative or qualitative data.* There was a notable lack of commitment to this policy among all seven populations of the study. In both the qualitative and quantitative phases of this study, this policy was not considered integral to the definition of an evangelical Christian college.

*Summary of Findings*

In summary, both the qualitative and quantitative data demonstrated clear support for the theological tenets and lifestyle stances that have been traditionally considered part of an evangelical Christian college. Even though the qualitative interviews did reveal some dissenting views in the theological areas of the virgin birth and miracles of Jesus, as well as the lifestyle stances relevant to abortion, sexual relationships, gambling and alcohol and tabacco use, these dissenting views were not strongly supported by the quantitative data. The only area of dissent that was supported in both the qualitative and quantitative data was the lack of support for the traditional rule against social dancing.

According to this research, constituents of Spring Arbor College view an evangelical Christian College as one that is committed to the historical and orthodox expression of the Christian faith. The divinity of Christ and the historical validity of his virgin birth, miraculous life, sacrificial death, and resurrection are considered central to the definition of the College. The College

should teach that salvation through Christ is exclusive and that the Bible is the only authoritative word of God. Evangelism is considered a natural and inseparable outcome of the College's mission. All members of the community--faculty, staff, and students--are expected to share their faith openly in both word and deed. Lifestyle policies should also reflect a distinctly "evangelical" position. The College is expected to have rules against alcohol and tobacco use. Policies should clearly state that sexual relationships should be reserved for marriage. Gambling should be prohibited and the College should have a statement against abortion. With support for such rules and policies noted, there is also a consistent refrain that all of these rules and policies should be enforced with a spirit of love and redemption.

Finally, there does appear to be some openness to accommodate cultural shift. This is seen in the attitudes regarding the lifestyle stance of social dancing. While many evangelical Christian colleges still have official rules against social dancing, the Spring Arbor College constituents did not voice strong support for this policy. Further, dancing is not considered to be a critical issue in the definition of an evangelical Christian college.

The following statement from a staff member summarizes well the conclusions drawn from both the qualitative and quantitative phases of this study:

> An evangelical Christian college should stand for the essentials. And those include the authority of scripture, the person of Jesus Christ, the nature of salvation, the sanctity of human life, the desire to live a holy life, the Great Commission to reach the world with the gospel, the desire to help the poor, the sick, those in prison, the orphans, widows, all the things

> that are commanded in scripture. And [an evangelical Christian college should stand for] ultimate obedience to Jesus . . . [An evangelical Christian college] should stand against attitudes of hatred, discrimination, greed, and all those sorts of values that Christ spoke against specifically. Individual issues like drinking and smoking and those sorts of things that are either not spoken of at all in scripture, or are spoken of tangentially, it should apply practical principles to those. For instance the Bible speaks very, very, specifically against homosexuality. And for me that's kind of a no-brainer. The misuse of alcohol is spoken of in scripture. Cocaine is never mentioned in scripture, but the same sorts of principles seem to apply. I can see an evangelical Christian college taking a standpoint of there will be no drugs, no drinking, no smoking, no dancing. I can see a different evangelical Christian college saying no drugs, no smoking, no drinking, but well – we don't have a problem with dancing. So there will be some flexibility there, but the principles require thought (Staff #3).

## Discussion

The following is a discussion of key conclusions relevant to this research. Subsequent to this discussion are recommendations for further action and research supported by the conclusions.

### *Definitions are Strong and Clear*

As indicated in chapter one, the assumption of this study was that students, parents, pastors, faculty, staff, alumni and board members of Spring Arbor College may not share the same definition of what constitutes an "evangelical Christian" college. The research questions were asked within the context of this perceived definitional ambiguity. The resulting data, however, demonstrated consistent and strong support for what was viewed as basic evangelical traditions. While the students and faculty were a bit more open and progressive, there was no evidence of strong dissent. There was virtually a

universal expectation that the College should stand strong on its historical affirmations and principles. Therefore, it appears that dissenting views are not evidence of confusion or a burgeoning movement, but to the contrary, simply the opinion of a lone individual or a very small minority. Even when there was dissent (as in the case of social dancing) it did not seem to be fueled by confusion over the definition of an "evangelical Christian college" but rather by clear conviction as to what it is and should be. At Spring Arbor College there appears to be a strong community ethos that serves to clarify positions and definitional boundaries. Because of such clarity and strength of conviction, differences can be spirited and even contentious. Dissenting views can be met with a response of indignation. For example, some participants believed that the College's Christian identity would be compromised if it abandoned tradition on issues such as abortion, alcohol and tobacco use, and the virgin birth. Even those who challenged the traditional perspective on such issues often acknowledged that their opinion was perhaps outside of the definition of an evangelical Christian college. Again, these responses, whether pro or con, did not seem to be evidence of confusion but rather of conviction and personal insight.

*Definitions Validate the Literature Review*

The literature review was confirmed and validated by the data obtained in this research. All constituent groups of Spring Arbor College defined an evangelical Christian college as one committed to the basic theological tenets

identified in the literature. The primacy of Jesus Christ, the authority of scripture, the exclusivity of salvation and the mandate to evangelize were all confirmed as being central to the definition of an evangelical Christian college. Likewise, the behavioral and social codes cited in the literature review were confirmed by this research. As mentioned above, the one exception to this was in the area of social dancing, where there was a noted lack of support for the traditional policy.

*Dissent Comes from the Perceived "Power Base"*

In this light, it is important to recognize that, while the dissenting voice in this research was indeed a small minority, this voice often came from faculty and board members, the assumed power base of the institution. This could potentially contribute to tension and confusion over the definition of what "evangelical Christian" means at Spring Arbor College. Even though there is basic agreement from all constituents groups concerning the behavioral and theological creeds of the College, an opposing voice from the faculty or the board of trustees could send a stronger signal than intended. These alternative views should be well defined and set in context so that other constituent groups do not misinterpret them as the College's official policy or position

*Students and Faculty may be the "Bell Weather" of Social Shift*

As stated above the data show strong agreement as to what it means to be an evangelical Christian college. The quantitative data, for example, shows all seven groups of the study with an average mean score of 3.4 or above on all

theological and lifestyle variables except for social dancing. The practical significance of this clearly implies that the different constituent groups generally agree with these lifestyle stances and theological tenets. It is important to note, however, that statistically, the faculty and students are less affirming than the other constituents of Spring Arbor College (See Tables 7 and 9). What looks insignificant when looking at the raw mean scores becomes quite interesting when the ANOVA is applied to compare and contrast these groups. With the faculty and students repeatedly demonstrating significantly lower scores than other constituents, they may represent the "front line" or "bell weather" of an ongoing discussion of what it means to be an evangelical Christian college. The end result at some time in the future may possibly be a "social shift" in constituent views and opinions.

Social dancing is a likely example of such a social shift. While a rule against dancing was once believed to be a necessary distinctive of the College, it clearly no longer engenders the same convictions. Several of the groups in this study reported neutral if not limited support for this rule. It is interesting to note that the faculty and students score the lowest of all seven constituent groups. Over time the conviction against social dancing for the College apparently has waned and it may be that these two groups have led this discussion. By definition the relationship between faculty and students involves ongoing discussions and the sharing of new information, ideas and opinions. Through such transactions it may be that an understanding of social dancing and its relevance to an evangelical Christian college has been continually reassessed

and reconstructed. In the same way, the data of this study suggest that the faculty and students, while agreeing with the key distinctives of the College, are perhaps opening a broader discussion relevant to key theological and lifestyle issues and what they mean to the definition of an evangelical Christian college.

*The Classroom is Critical*

Because of this relationship between faculty and students, the classroom and its corresponding dialogue becomes critical to the evolving definition of what it means to be an evangelical Christian college. Faculty and students share a unique relationship and they may in fact represent the front line of an ideological discussion and the consequent assumptions of meanings, clarification of definitions, and formulation of identity. An evangelical Christian college, at its best, is a place where students feel free to ask questions about what it means to have faith, what it means to be Christian, and what it means to be evangelical. Assumptions and bias, heritage and tradition, the peripheral and the primary can all be openly debated, not only in the context of "what" is believed but "why" it is believed. The result of such a mentoring relationship between the teacher and his/her students is the likely the ongoing construction and reconstruction of what evangelical Christian college means not only to the students but to the faculty and the broader campus and its representative constituents.

*An Open Discussion is Important*

New understandings of an evangelical Christian college will likely be constructed with or without structure or planned dialogue. The reference to social dancing above may bear evidence of this. The question, however, is: How strategic and proactive should this discussion be? If the discussion of the priorities, values and defining character of the College is open, ongoing, public and planned then the full disclosure and full involvement of the College community could result in greater ownership and understanding of the College's mission and goals. Without such openness, the result could be more negative. When social shifts and new understandings take place outside of the context of planned and open dialogue misinformation, assumption, confusion, and distrust may be unintended byproducts. Institutional leaders may find it beneficial to sponsor an ongoing discussion about what it means to be an evangelical Christian college. Through such dialogue, various constituent understandings could be revealed, acknowledged, addressed, challenged and/or embraced. The result of this collegial exchange could be a clearer understanding of what is considered to be foundational to the definition of the college.

*The Integration of Faith and Learning is a Priority*

This theme surfaced as a clear definitional distinctive for of Spring Arbor College. The qualitative phase of this research demonstrated that members of all the various constituent groups believed that an evangelical college must rigorously pursue "all truth as being God's truth" (Snyder, 2001, p. 4-6). The

constituents in this research argued that a Christian college is more than a cloistered community dedicated to a certain theology and loyal to a specific code of conduct. The ideal, as stated in the Spring Arbor College Concept (see Appendix C), is for the evangelical college to be a community of learners, dedicated to the study of the liberal arts, with Jesus Christ as its perspective for all learning. The goal is for all constituents of the College to be informed and critical participants in the contemporary world and its affairs.

*Definition is Constructed through Transactions*

One of the methodological assumptions of this study was that knowledge is constructed and transactional. As stated in chapter three, the constructivist framework focuses not only on investigating and describing the multiple perceptions held by the subjects of the study, but also on the development of a new construct stemming from the research itself (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, pp. 105-107). What people claim to know about an evangelical Christian college is likely to be the result of the transactions between church, community, family, and others associated with the college. Likewise, such knowledge can also be the result of the transaction between the subjects of this study and the research process itself. Board member #15 summarized this well when she indicated that he/she was challenged by the interview process to think more deeply about what "evangelical Christian" college meant. For this board member, the words "evangelical Christian" college took on new meaning as a consequence of the research process itself.

*Summary*

The purpose of this research was to assess what the words "evangelical Christian college" mean for those associated with Spring Arbor College. At Spring Arbor College, the words "evangelical Christian college" appear to represent a dynamic that is alive and rich with conviction and purpose. Its historical roots run deep in the liberal arts tradition. The pursuit of truth is not to be shunned, for there is a belief that all truth is God's truth. At an evangelical Christian college, knowledge, understanding, truth and wisdom are considered to be inseparable from the women and men striving to understand God and their relationship with him and his creation. Scripture is to be honored and Christ considered central to all the institution is and does. Daily life is expected to reflect the ideals of scripture and the desire to comply with its directives.

While these themes seem to be clear, there is tension. A small minority of those involved in this study believed that abortion, gambling, and alcohol and tobacco use are issues outside of the bounds of scriptural directives and should, therefore, be left to the discretion of the individual members of the college community. Likewise, while there was basic agreement as to what is considered a scriptural context for human sexuality, there was some disagreement as to how punitive the evangelical Christian college should be in enforcing such standards. One example of the shifting nature of the cultural traditions commonly associated with the evangelical Christian college was found in the response to the rule against social dancing. Even though this is a longstanding policy and one that is quite common in many other evangelical Christian colleges, it is interesting to

note that there was limited support for this policy at Spring Arbor College. Dancing is likely an example of cultural shift. Much like co-ed swimming, playing cards, going to the movie theater, and complying with certain dress codes, dancing is now considered a personal choice and not a scriptural directive.

With these disagreements noted, it seems evident that in this research there is a clearly understood foundation as to what an evangelical Christian college is and should be. An evangelical Christian college is by definition one that models a way of thought, a way of life, and a way of faith. An evangelical Christian college is not a place of thoughtless indoctrination, but to the contrary a place of serious study, honest questions, and critical engagement, in the context of a humble allegiance to the traditions of the evangelical Christian church. Piper's (pp. 114 –116) summary of a Christian college seems to apply well:

> Indoctrination is not the only alternative to faith-weakening education. In our day, the word "indoctrination" usually refers to unthinking transmission of tradition. But I would affirm strongly that this is not the only alternative . . . The real alternative is a faculty made up of great Christian thinkers who are great lovers of God with profound allegiance to the truth of God's Word and razor-sharp discernment of all the subtle idols of our age. What is needed is great teacher with great hearts for the great old verities of the faith–verities that they hold because there are great reasons for holding them–reasons that will stand up to hard questions . . . Our problem is not that "indoctrination" is the only alternative to education. It isn't. Our problem is that so few people have ever tasted great Christian education

or seen great Christian thinking going on from a profoundly God-centered perspective in an atmosphere where students can feel that the faculty would gladly die for Jesus.

"Evangelical Christian" college does mean something to the constituents of Spring Arbor College. To its faculty, staff, parents, students, alumni, pastors and board members, Spring Arbor is a college that stands firm in its theological and social convictions while it aggressively promotes the integration of faith and learning. Spring Arbor College is well understood by its constituents, and they appear to be committed to its unique definition and distinctives. Disagreements, even from a strong voice within the minority, do not seem to betray a lack of clarity. Instead, these dissenting views reflect an ongoing discussion--an interactive construction of what the words "evangelical Christian" mean. This discussion, perhaps will be aided and perpetuated by the information provided through this research. Such a discussion will only serve to strengthen and further clarify what "evangelical Christian" mean to those who choose to be part of Spring Arbor College.

## Recommendations For Action

Findings from this study lead to several recommendations relevant to policy, instruction, recruiting, retention, promotion and selection. A summary of these recommendations will be organized under the following headings: 1) Recommendations for policy: Implications for trustees; 2) Recommendations for instruction: Implications for faculty; 3) Recommendations for recruiting and

promotion: Implications for staff and administration; 4) Recommendations for dialogue: Implications for community; and 5) Recommendations for selection: Implications for students and parents.

- *Recommendations for policy: Implications for trustees.* As the data demonstrated, there is clear support both qualitatively and quantitatively for the traditional positions commonly associated with an evangelical Christian college. The various constituents of Spring Arbor College believe that an evangelical Christian college, by definition, has a clear position on certain theological tenets and lifestyle stances. The literature as cited in chapter two calls for clarity in institutional identity. Parents, students and accrediting agencies all expect a college to honor what it claims to be in its defining language. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the trustees to communicate, support, and perpetuate the theological and behavioral standards of the college through official policy. Board-ratified standards on behavioral codes that address alcohol and tobacco use, gambling, sexuality and orthodox theology may be necessary (see Spring Arbor College Community Covenant: Appendix D). Policies for faculty, staff and students need to be made clear in the recruiting, orientation and hiring process. Doctrinal statements must be evaluated regularly and affirmed or amended in official policy statements and other corresponding documents.
- *Recommendations for teaching and mentoring: Implications for faculty.* It is clear that the various constituents of the evangelical Christian college expect the faculty to be the standard bearers of the institution. Faculty are called not

only to teach content but also to serve as mentors. They are expected to model what is considered essential to evangelical behavior and orthodoxy. Therefore, it is critical for all faculty to have a clear understanding of what Spring Arbor College means when it defines itself as being evangelical. Behavioral codes as well as doctrinal commitments should be explicitly stated. A theological creed should be clearly understood. All current faculty as well as future faculty hires should be aware of this creed and understand their role in supporting and teaching it. Professional development should include senior faculty serving as mentors to younger colleagues on ways to integrate the college's primary commitments into the curriculum. Examples should be shared on how to address controversial issues such as abortion, alcohol use, and homosexuality from the college's unique evangelical perspective. Materials that effectively set the stage for addressing such issues within the evangelical context should be readily shared among faculty as part of this professional development strategy.

- *Recommendations for recruiting and promotion: Implications for staff and administration*. The pursuit of "fit" between customer and product is predicated on clear communication. All materials should clearly define the college's evangelical commitment. Behavioral and theological positions should be explicitly stated, both in printed materials and oral presentations. The admissions staff, coaches, faculty, and student development staff should help orient new students and their parents to the college by clarifying what it means to be part of an evangelical Christian college. The student handbook,

college catalogue, and application materials should all make policies and expectations clear to those who are considering becoming part of the community.

- *Recommendation for Dialogue: Implications for Community.* Community discussion concerning this research would help to build a deepening understanding of Spring Arbor College's definition of evangelical Christian college. It would aid in the process of constructing a definition that is more fully understood by all constituents. This ongoing transaction between the "knower and the known" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, pp. 105-109) would confirm or challenge assumptions on issues like social dancing, alcohol use, sexual standards, etc. Clarity of definition is constructed upon the foundation of such transactions. As stated above, this open discussion is critical for the recruitment and retention of students, parents, faculty and staff who are considering joining the College community. Effective recruitment requires that faculty, staff and students understand what Spring Arbor College means when it defines itself as "evangelical Christian." Likewise, retention of these same students, faculty, and staff is built on this same clarity of definition and "fit" between constituents and the College.
- *Recommendations for selection: Implications for parents and students.* It is critical that all prospective students and their parents understand what Spring Arbor College means when it claims to be evangelical Christian. All parents and students should interact with and respond to the theological and behavioral distinctives of the institution before they enroll. This could be

accomplished by requiring all applicants to respond in writing to the College's theological creed and behavioral code. Such engagement with the ideals of the college would insure that no student or parent is surprised by a particular position. This would also enable the student development and admissions staffs to more accurately assess a student's understanding of the priorities and commitments of the College. Corresponding engagements, designed to increase student "ownership" of institutional ideals and expectations, could be planned through orientation sessions, freshmen classes and mentoring.

## Recommendations for Further Research

As the literature and the data in this research show, there are a number of strong opinions held by various constituent groups at Spring Arbor College concerning the definition of evangelical Christian college. As mentioned above, however, this study is limited in its scope and generalizability. Further research could address many of these limitations.

The "trigger issues" such as those mentioned above should be included in subsequent research. Certain constituent groups may hold strong prositive or negative views concerning the theological and social significance of creationism, evolution, pacifism, feminism, etc. By including these and other topics in follow-up research, a greater depth of understanding concerning the words "evangelical Christian college" could be obtained.

Other denominations, churches and colleges should be included in the study. The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities now has over 150

member and affiliate institutions representing numerous theological and social traditions. Further research should include these diverse institutions. As mentioned above, it should not be assumed that the views and opinions of a Free Methodist constituent base would be the same as the views of a Christian Reformed Church constituent base or that of the Southern Baptists, etc. Parents, students, faculty and staff from these various denominational backgrounds may identify with different 'trigger issues" and definitional expectations. For example, biblical inerrancy is known to be a critical distinctive for some church denominations, such as the General Association of Regular Baptists and the Grace Brethren Fellowship. Likewise, Southern Baptists and the Christian Reformed churches may view tobacco and alcohol use differently than Nazarene and Wesleyan Churches.

Subsequent research should include a deeper analysis of the issues. For example, what does "authority of scripture" really mean? Does the prohibition of alcohol and tobacco use include both an on-and off-campus restriction? Should social dancing be sponsored on campus, or is it acceptable only at off campus events? Are certain types of social dancing still considered unacceptable? These questions must be asked in order to gain a more complete understanding of what was intended in the participants' responses.

Finally, additional research should focus on the power structure of the college or university. There seems to be noticeable agreement on many of the theological and social issues relevant to this study. Many trustees, faculty and administrators believe that an evangelical Christian college would lose its

distinctive character and reputation if it stepped away from its theological creed and behavioral code. This research, however, does not adequately address the question as to how prescriptive this needs to be. Should faculty be required to sign a specific doctrinal statement? Should all members of the community (faculty, staff, students and trustees) be required by policy to abide by certain behavioral codes? Should faculty be expected to compromise their academic freedom for the sake of doctrinal purity? Should disciplinary action be taken against members of the community who violate what is deemed to be a fundamental tenet of an evangelical Christian college? All of these questions must be addressed by the power structure of the institution as it attempts to define and clarify what it means by "evangelical Christian."

## Limitations

This study has some clear limitations. First, it is important to acknowledge that the results of this research are not generalizable to other colleges and universities. This has been a case study specifically of Spring Arbor College. Because of this, it must be remembered that the results only pertain to the constituents of Spring Arbor College. Other colleges that claim to be evangelical Christian colleges may or may not find the data and results to be representative of their institutions.

A second limitation of the study is the fact that the qualitative interviews involved a limited number of interviewees. Sixteen interviewees were selected to represent the seven different constituent groups of the College. While a

research advisory committee was employed as a means of assuring objectivity in the selection of these 16 participants, it must be acknowledged that even the members of this advisory committee should not be assumed to be immune to personal bias in the recommendations they made. Therefore, the qualitative results could vary with the selection of a different group of interviewees. Generalizability to all members of the respective populations cannot be assumed.

Third, there were a number of non-respondents in the quantitative phase of the study. The entire population of each group was included rather than employing random sampling and the corresponding response rates were very positive. As much as 40 percent of certain groups, however, did not respond to the survey. It is possible that these non-respondents may have held different perspectives and opinions than those who did respond.

Fourth, the alumni and parent data in the quantitative phase of the study are not generalizable beyond the Alumni Board and the Parent's Council of Spring Arbor College. It cannot be assumed that these data are representative of the entire parent and alumni base of the institution.

Fifth, while the pastors of all four Free Methodist conferences in Michigan and Ohio were included in the study, pastors from other states, countries and denominations were not. It is therefore possible that the opinion of the pastors as reflected in the research is limited in its scope because of these geographic restrictions. Views from pastors on the east or west coasts of the United States, for example, may be different from those in the midwest. Likewise, evangelical

pastors from other denominations and other countries may differ from this select group of Free Methodist pastors.

Sixth, the scope of the research was limited by the questions asked. Because of pragmatic necessity and time restraints, many topics that could be pertinent to the definition of an evangelical Christian college may have been omitted from the research. Topics such as evolution, creationism, feminism, church governance, pacifism, racism, and political allegiances are all examples of issues that could likely be relevant to one's personal definition of what it means to be evangelical.

Finally, it is clear from the literature review as cited in chapter two that the definition of evangelical Christian can vary greatly from group to group, and church to church. Therefore, it is important to clarify that the definition of an evangelical Christian college as held by the Free Methodist constituencies of Spring Arbor College may be quite different from the definition of an evangelical Christian college held by those associated with other churches and denominations.

# APPENDICES

Appendix A

## Interview Protocol

Introduction:

As you know, Spring Arbor College is an evangelical Christian college. This interview is being conducted to understand more about what the distinction "evangelical Christian" means when a college uses it as part of its definition. In other words, I would like to learn more about what the words "evangelical Christian" college mean to you. I hope that you feel comfortable expressing your candid views and opinions. Rest assured that all information gathered through the course of this interview will be kept confidential. When I report these results for my dissertation or discuss them with any colleagues, etc., I will ensure the confidentiality of all participants. This interview will take approximately one hour. If at any point you have any question about a given question and/or would prefer to address a different issue please tell me. If you agree, this interview will be taped so that I will be able to focus on our conversation as opposed to taking notes. At any point you may request that I turn off the tape recorder. Would you please review the consent form. If you are comfortable with this description of the study and your role, I would like you to sign this form and we will proceed with the interview.

Questions:

1. Primary:

- What does "evangelical Christian" college mean to you?

Secondary:

- How is an "evangelical Christian" college different from other colleges?
- Why have you chosen to affiliate with an "evangelical Christian" college?
- What key distinction would you identify that you believe describes an "evangelical Christian" college?
- What issues or positions do you believe an "evangelical Christian" college should stand for?
- What issues or positions do you believe an "evangelical Christian" college should stand against?
- What positive things would you say about an "evangelical Christian" college?
- What negative things would you say about an "evangelical Christian" college?

2. Primary

- What position do you think an "evangelical Christian" college should take on the Bible?

Secondary:

- What position do you think an "evangelical Christian" college should take regarding the Bible being the only authoritative word of God?

- What position do you think an "evangelical Christian" college should take pertaining to the Bible being without error.

3. Primary:

- What position do you think an "evangelical Christian" college should take regarding Jesus Christ?

Secondary:

- What position do you think an "evangelical Christian" college should take regarding the virgin birth of Jesus Christ?
- What position do you think an "evangelical Christian" college should take regarding the miracles of Jesus Christ?
- What position do you think an "evangelical Christian" college should take regarding the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

4. Primary:

- What position do you think an "evangelical Christian" college should take regarding salvation?

Secondary:

- What position do you think an "evangelical Christian" college take regarding Jesus Christ and salvation?

5. Primary:

- What position do you think an "evangelical Christian" college should take regarding evangelism, i.e. working to convert people through missions or some other means of sharing one's faith?

Secondary:

- What position do you think an "evangelical Christian" college take regarding telling other people that Jesus Christ is the means of salvation?

6. Primary:

- What positions on social and behavioral issues do you believe an "evangelical Christian" college should stand for or against?

Secondary:

- What position do you think an "evangelical Christian" college should take regarding alcohol and tobacco use?
- What position do you think an "evangelical Christian" college should take regarding dancing?
- What position do you think an "evangelical Christian" college should take regarding gambling?
- What position do you think an "evangelical Christian" college should take regarding premarital or extramarital sexual relationships?

- What position do you think an "evangelical Christian" college should take regarding sexual orientation?
- What position do you think an "evangelical Christian" college should take regarding abortion?

Conclusion:

We are now at the end of the interview. Do you have further comments you would like to make regarding the definition of "evangelical Christian" college?

**"Evangelical Christian" College: Constituent Understandings and Perceptions**

**Consent Form**

I understand that the research project in which I am agreeing to participate concerns my perceptions of what the words "Evangelical Christian" mean when a college uses it as part of its definition. I understand that I will be interviewed for approximately one hour. I also understand that information obtained from this interview may help Spring Arbor College gain a further understanding of what its defining language means to its stakeholders and thus it may help the College in its communication and planning. Finally I understand that this interview information will also aid in the completion of a doctoral dissertation aimed at understanding what the dynamic of the words "evangelical Christian" mean to you as a member of the Spring Arbor College community.

I further understand that the researcher will hold my responses in strict confidence and that no comments will be attributed to me in any reports on this study. Furthermore, no details will be provided in any verbal or written reports that could identify me. I recognize that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw my participation in this study at any time or decline to answer any questions.

Please check one statement below:

____ I give consent that the interview can be audiotaped. At any time I may ask that the tape recorder be stopped.

____ I do not give consent that the interview be audiotaped.

_____ _____
Name Date

_____
Signature

Researcher: Everett Piper
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# Appendix B

**"Evangelical Christian Colleges"**
***Survey of Definitions***

**Introduction:** Spring Arbor College defines itself as an "evangelical Christian college". This survey is for the purpose of assessing what you believe the distinction "evangelical Christian" means when a college uses it as part of its definition. In other words, what do the words "evangelical Christian college" mean to you?

Please review the following questions and respond as completely as possible. You should be able to complete the survey in approximately 10 minutes. All reports resulting from this research will assure the confidentiality of all participants.

Upon completion of the survey please return the researcher:

Everett Piper
Spring Arbor College
Spring Arbor, Michigan 49283
epiper@arbor.edu
517.750.6333

**Instructions:** To complete this survey, rate the items listed according to the scale provided. Each item should be rated independently of the others. You are not being asked to rank the items. As you respond to each item, please consider your personal opinion as to what the words "evangelical Christian college" mean when a college uses them as part of its definition.

**Using the scale below, circle the number that best represents the extent to which you agree with each item.**

**1 = Strongly disagree**
**2 = Disagree**
**3 = Neutral**
**4 = Agree**
**5 = Strongly Agree**

| **Items:** | **Low** | | | | **High** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. An evangelical Christian college should maintain that the Bible is the only inspired and authoritative word of God. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. An evangelical Christian college should be open to other books being as inspired and authoritative as the Bible. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. An evangelical Christian college should maintain that the Bible is without error. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. An evangelical Christian college should be open to the Bible containing some errors. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. An evangelical Christian college should maintain that the virgin birth of Jesus Christ is an historical fact. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. An evangelical should be open to other explanations for the birth of Jesus Christ. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. An evangelical Christian college should maintain that the miracles of Jesus are historical facts. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. An evangelical Christian college should be open to other explanations to the miracles of Jesus Christ. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. An evangelical Christian college should maintain that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is an historical fact. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | Low | | | | High |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. An evangelical Christian college should be open to other explanations regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. An evangelical Christian college should maintain that Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. An evangelical Christian college should be open to a variety of ways to salvation in addition to Jesus Christ. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. An evangelical Christian college should maintain that Christians are required by Scripture to evangelize, i.e. work to convert people through missions or some other means of sharing one's faith. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. An evangelical Christian college should have policies against alcohol use. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. An evangelical Christian college should have policies against tobacco use. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. An evangelical Christian college should have policies against social dancing. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. An evangelical Christian college should have policies against gambling. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. An evangelical Christian college should have policies against premarital and extramarital sexual relations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. An evangelical Christian college should have policies against homosexual behavior. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. An evangelical Christian college should have policies against abortion. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. An evangelical Christian college should promote social justice. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Please mark appropriate response for each of the following catagories:**

22. Sex: Female ___ Male ____

23. Age: 18-22____ 23-30 ____ 31-40 ____ 41-50 ____ 51-60 ____ 60+ ____

24. College affiliation: Student ____ Alumnus ____ Parent ____ Pastor ____
Board Member ____ Faculty ____ Staff/Administration ____

25. Ethnicity: African-American ____ Caucasian ____ Asian-American ____
International ____ Native-American ____ Hispanic ____ Other ____

26. If you are a student, what is your status?: Freshman ____ Sophomore ____
Junior ____ Senior ____ Graduate____ Other____

27. Church Affiliation: Free Methodist ___ Baptist ____ United Methodist ___ Presbyterian ___ Reformed ___ Bible ___ Assembly of God ___ Catholic ___ Church of God ___ Lutheran ___ Mennonite ___ Nazarene ___ Wesleyan ___ Non-denominational/Independent ___ Other ___

28. Do you consider yourself to be of the Christian Faith? Yes ___ No ___

29 Do you consider yourself to be an Evangelical Christian? Yes ___ No ___

**Michigan State University**
**Study Information Sheet**
**"Evangelical Christian" College: Constituent Understandings and Perceptions**

**Information for Participants**

You are invited to participate in a research study associated with the completion of a dissertation conducted by Everett Piper, a Ph.D. student within the department of Higher, Adult and Lifelong Education at Michigan State University. The title of this study is "Evangelical Christian" College: Constituent Understandings and Perceptions.

The purpose of this study is to assess what you believe the distinction "evangelical Christian" means when a college uses it as part of its definition. In other words, what do the words "evangelical Christian" college mean to you?

You can complete this questionnaire in approximately 15 minutes.

Information from the completed questionnaires will be entered into a computer, combined and reported statistically. Identification numbers in the upper right hand corner of the first page are only to enable me to follow up with reminders, if needed. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

If you have any questions at any time about this study or its corresponding procedures, you may contact the researcher, Everett Piper, at The Office of Student Development, Spring Arbor College, Spring Arbor, Michigan 49283 or by calling 517-750-6333.

If you have further questions or concerns regarding this research project you may contact Dr. David E Wright, Chair, University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1046, 517-355-2180.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this questionnaire.

The Spring Arbor University Concept
(2001-2002 Faculty Handbook)

Spring Arbor University is a community of learners distinguished by our life-long involvement in the study and application of the liberal arts, total commitment to Jesus Christ as our perspective for learning, and critical participation in the contemporary world.

# The SAC Community Covenant
(2001-2002 Faculty Handbook)

## Introduction

As an academic community, Spring Arbor University is shaped by the Spring Arbor Concept and by the stated mission that grows from it. The university community is unique because of these commitments and because it includes both campus students and Adult Studies students through its various extension sites. As an educational institution, SAC seeks to be thoroughly Christian. This SAC Community Covenant affirms the university's Christian commitment, recognizing the diversity of its extended student body.

As part of its commitment to Christian integrity, the university affirms the same foundational standards for students, staff, faculty, and trustees. This Covenant, therefore, includes all these groups and serves as the basis for the more specific behavioral expectations required of campus students. Persons who become members of the SAC Community as trustees, faculty, staff, or students covenant to accept and model the Spring Arbor Concept as elaborated in this Community Covenant.

The Community Covenant includes biblical principles and Christian lifestyle affirmations that are central to our Christian identity and should be affirmed by all who affiliate with Spring Arbor University. It also includes specific community disciplines that help to create the kind of Christian learning environment desired by the university and envisioned by the Spring Arbor Concept.

## Biblical Principles

The Bible provides basic principles for Christian character and behavior. These include the following:

1. Principle of LORDSHIP: Jesus Christ is Lord over all dimensions of life, thought, and culture. Jesus calls us to a life of faith and love including obedience to the moral teaching of the Bible and to responsible discipleship in all of life (Luke 9:23; Philippians 2:1-13; Colossians 1:10-23; Hebrews 12:1-3, 13:12-16; I Peter 1:13-16).
2. Principle of LOVE: Love for God and love for others are the primary

motivations for Christian relationships and behavior. Scripture reminds us that love is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:10; Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 6:4-6; Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 10:27; John 13:34-35, 14:15; Romans 13:9).

3. Principle of COMMUNITY: Community is central to the life of the university and its understanding of Christian education. Christian love includes mutual accountability and forgiveness within the community, as well as sensitivity toward others' needs and weaknesses. It includes participation in the worship and activities of the church, which is a necessary context for Christian living (Matthew 18:20; Acts 2:42-47; Romans 12:9-21; Ephesians 4:25, 5:15-21; Colossians 3:12-17; Hebrews 10:24-25).

4. Principle of CHARACTER: God, through the Holy Spirit, places in every believer the inner resources to grow in Christian character and to minister to others through supportive relationships. This community encourages an environment in which members can grow in compassion, integrity, and the integration of faith and learning (Matthew 15:10-20; Romans 8:5-17, 12:1-2; Galatians 5:22-25; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 4:4-9; I Peter 2:21).

5. Principle of RESPONSIBLE FREEDOM: God gives us the freedom to live responsibly within the framework of His Word. He calls us to pursue righteousness and practice justice and mercy toward everyone. Responsible freedom includes disciplined stewardship in all areas of life and critical participation in the larger culture (Genesis 1:26-28, 2:15-17; Micah 6:8; John 8:31-36; Galatians 5:1 and 13-14; I Peter 2:16, 4:10-11).

Christian Lifestyle Affirmations

A lifestyle consistent with the above principles is expected of all members of the university community. Jesus calls, and by grace assists us, to practice Christian virtues and to avoid attitudes and actions that the Bible condemns as sinful. Members of the university community agree to exhibit such Christian virtues as humility, honesty, a forgiving spirit, self-discipline, faith, hope, and love. The university trustees, faculty, and staff seek to be role models to the students in the practice of these virtues.

Attitudes that the Bible condemns as morally wrong include greed, jealousy, pride, lust, bitterness, uncontrolled anger, and prejudice based on race or ethnicity, sex, or socioeconomic status. While these attitudes are not always obvious, they are as subject to God's judgment as are more visible sins. The Bible also condemns such behavior as drunkenness, stealing, profanity, unfair discrimination, dishonesty, occult practices, and sexual sins such as premarital sex, marital unfaithfulness, and homosexual behavior.

Responsible freedom includes respect for the sanctity of human life and faithful stewardship of mind, body, time, gifts and abilities, finances, and the natural environment. It also requires thoughtful Christian discernment in matters of entertainment and associations.

## Community Disciplines

In addition to the moral standards prescribed in the Bible, the university has adopted certain disciplines that are intended to foster a campus atmosphere consistent with the Spring Arbor Concept and with the university's Christian heritage. These disciplines embody such foundational Christian principles as self-control, avoidance of harmful practices, and sensitivity to the heritage and practices of other Christians and people of other belief systems. The university community expects all its members to abstain from gambling, profanity, the illegal use of drugs, and the use of tobacco and alcoholic beverages. These community disciplines apply to trustees, faculty, staff, and all undergraduate Spring Arbor campus students. They also apply to adult studies students, graduate students, and adjunct faculty whenever they are involved in university functions or using University facilities.

## Conclusion

The university seeks through this covenant to cultivate an environment in which Christian character may flourish. The Covenant is intended to promote a lifestyle based on Christian principles and devotion to Christ. It affirms that living Christianly results from conscious choices rather than mere acceptance of prevailing practices. The university's larger hope is that the SAC community may in some measure model and point towards the kind of gracious, just, and peaceable society pictured in the biblical vision of the Kingdom of God.

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

TO: Ann E. AUSTIN
417 Erickson Hall

RE: IRB#99460 CATEGORY: 2-F

**APPROVAL DATE: August 17, 1999**

TITLE:"EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN" COLLEGE: CONSTITUENT UNDERSTANDINGS AND PERCEPTIONS

The University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects' (UCRIHS) review of this project is complete and I am pleased to advise that the rights and welfare of the human subjects appear to be adequately protected and methods to obtain informed consent are appropriate. Therefore, the **UCRIHS approved this project.**

**RENEWALS:** UCRIHS approval is valid for one calendar year, beginning with the approval date shown above. Projects continuing beyond one year must be renewed with the green renewal form. A maximum of four such expedited renewals possible. Investigators wishing to continue a project beyond that time need to submit it again for a complete review.
**REVISIONS:** UCRIHS must review any changes in procedures involving human subjects, prior to initiation of the change. If this is done at the time of renewal, please use the green renewal form. To revise an approved protocol at any other time during the year, send your written request to the UCRIHS Chair, requesting revised approval and referencing the project's IRB# and title. Include in your request a description of the change and any revised instruments, consent forms or advertisements that are applicable.
**PROBLEMS/CHANGES:** Should either of the following arise during the course of the work, notify UCRIHS promptly: 1) problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving human subjects or 2) changes in the research environment or new information indicating greater risk to the human subjects than existed when the protocol was previously reviewed and approved.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 517 355-2180 or via email: UCRIHS@pilot.msu.edu. Please note that all UCRIHS forms are located on the web: http://www.msu.edu/unit/vprgs/UCRIHS/

Sincerely,

David E. Wright, Ph. D.

DEW:

cc: Everett Piper

OFFICE OF
**RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES**

**ersity Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS)**

chigan State University
dministration Building
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MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

August 22, 2000

TO: Ann E. AUSTIN
417 Erickson Hall

RE: IRB # 99-460 CATEGORY: 2-F

RENEWAL APPROVAL DATE: August 22, 2000

TITLE: "EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN" COLLEGE: CONSTITUENT UNDERSTANDINGS AND PERCEPTIONS

The University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects' (UCRIHS) review of this project is complete and I am pleased to advise that the rights and welfare of the human subjects appear to be adequately protected and methods to obtain informed consent are appropriate. Therefore, the UCRIHS APPROVED THIS PROJECT'S RENEWAL.

RENEWALS: UCRIHS approval is valid for one calendar year, beginning with the approval date shown above. Projects continuing beyond one year must be renewed with the green renewal form. A maximum of four such expedited renewal are possible. Investigators wishing to continue a project beyond that time need to submit it again for complete review.
REVISIONS: UCRIHS must review any changes in procedures involving human subjects, prior to initiation of the change. If this is done at the time of renewal, please use the green renewal form. To revise an approved protocol at any other time during the year, send your written request to the UCRIHS Chair, requesting revised approval and referencing the project's IRB# and title. Include in your request a description of the change and any revised instruments, consent forms or advertisements that are applicable.
PROBLEMS/CHANGES: Should either of the following arise during the course of the work, notify UCRIHS promptly: 1) problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving human subjects or 2) changes in the research environment or new information indicating greater risk to the human subjects than existed when the protocol was previously reviewed and approved.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 517 355-2180 or via email: UCRIHS@pilot.msu.edu.

Sincerely,

Ashir Kumar, M.D.
Interim Chair, UCRIHS

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