



March 2017

Embracing Change While Remaining Christ Centered: Covenant Christian School Leadership in a Post-Modern World

Dear Parents:

More than ever in our nation's history, Christian school leaders must be clear and deliberate in defining and upholding the vision, mission, and purpose of their schools – but that is not enough. From our school's articles of incorporation, by-laws, employment and student admissions contracts to compliance with government regulations regarding accounting standards and development gifts, etcetera, the changing moral standards of today's American society, aided in part by the federal judicial branch, necessitates diligent and proactive actions to preserve the Christ centered culture of our school. In President George Washington's farewell address to the nation, he cautioned that our nation's survival and its future prosperity are dependent upon our religious faith by stating, "Of all dispositions, religion and morality are indispensable supports." The Northwest Ordinance, which was introduced the same day as the Bill of Rights on July 13, 1787, states, "Religion, and morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall be forever encouraged." Religion shall be "forever encouraged" – wow! – what a stark contrast to today's American culture that advocates to regulate and remove faith and religion from the public square.

In preparation for our school reaccreditation later this month, we conducted a self-study titled "*Refining the PreK-12 Christian educational model built on a foundation of discipleship while pursuing excellence in scholastics, the arts, and athlet-*



ics in a postmodern world." Through cross sectional quantitative and qualitative surveys taken by parents, students, and faculty/staff in April of 2016, the study speaks loudly about the value you as parents place on maintaining a Christ centered environment and the importance of interpersonal relationships, in particular student and teacher relationships. The importance of hiring and retaining dedicated Christ followers who are also subject matter experts cannot be overstated, and not only is this year's faculty the most highly qualified the school has ever employed in its 38-year history, 98% of them have stated in writing they will accept a teaching contract for next year should one be extended. Likewise, our student reenrollment rate for next year is currently an impressive 92.5%, with some families departing due to job relocations and changes in income or marital status. These percentages are indicative of the broader picture that mirrors our self-study which reflects a stable, healthy family-school partnership, one that requires open and frequent communication in

view of the multiple evangelical denominations represented within the school's body of believers.

As a refresher for those of you who have not recently undergone the admissions process, all applicants must provide written and oral professions of faith, a written pastoral recommendation referencing regular church attendance, written recommendations from the student's English and math teacher, and scholastic proficiency on norm and criterion referenced entrance tests is also expected. It is a robust process that aids in properly yoking our family-school community with like-minded Christ followers who believe in the inerrant Word of God and the need for a quality, challenging college preparatory school experience for their student.

A review of scholarly literature relative to Christian education indicates Christian schools are closing in record numbers. One recent dissertation by V. Nicholas (2016) titled, "*Schools at risk: An analysis of factors endangering the evangelical Christian school movement in America*" reveals over three hundred American based Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) schools are closing annually, and it may surprise you to know that only 15% of all ACSI schools are now located in the United States with 85% residing overseas (ACSI School Choice Research Study, 2017). Reasons for closures are legion; however, a prevailing theme is the inability for Christian schools to adapt to the changing external environments around them and rising expectations of parents. Millennial parents, the older ones now between the ages of 25-34, have even higher expectations of their school than their Generation X and Baby Boomer II predecessors. Christian schools that have enjoyed continuous enrollment and budgetary growth are particularly susceptible as hubris and complacency must be overcome by new initiatives.

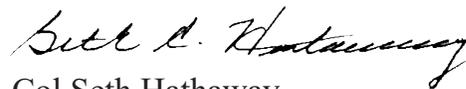
We continue to seek self-improvement in response to the changing demands around us through initiatives like the use of cloud based applications through programs like Webassign and Turn-It-In, our 1 to 1 iPad implementation for grades 9-12, the distinguished speaker program for grades 6-12, robotics club, and the expansion of our dual enrollment program to a total of 33 class hours,

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which enables students to earn joint high school and college credit taught by one of our highly qualified faculty who serve as an adjunct professor for Truett-McConnell or Point Universities (both are CHRISTIAN institutions). Incidentally, we are the only college preparatory school in the greater Athens area, public, secular private, or Christian, which offers on campus dual enrollment courses taught by its own instructors.

New initiatives require a calculated level of risk to implement, and studies have proven that Christian schools that are closing are doing so in part because they are locked into a mentality of what worked yesterday will work today. The students currently inhabiting our campus are the fortunate sons and daughters who are writing the most recent chapter in the storied history of a school built to honor our Lord. For their sake, and for those who follow in their footsteps, we must continue to embrace change, moderate change that makes sense in view of the changing environment around us. Thank you for making a Christian education a fiscal priority in your home; together, we will work towards our prophetic mission of preparing tomorrow's leaders for Christ.

Warm regards and in His service,



Col Seth Hathaway
Head of School

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