

# The Evolution of a Christian Business School's Mission - Bringing "Business As Mission" to a Business School's Mission

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**ABSTRACT:** Colleges of business typically seek accreditation to achieve legitimacy and raise their reputations. Major business school accreditors (AACSB, ACBSP, and IACBE) all base their accreditation standards on college-created mission statements. This paper describes how one Christian business school developed a unique mission statement in response to both accreditation standards and as a spiritual transformation catalyst. This statement calls for the college to "develop business leaders who embrace the values and virtues of Jesus," and it is now being inculcated through curricular and co-curricular activities. This paper details how three programs in particular: Business as Mission, Servant Leadership, and Service Learning—manifest and lend credence to the mission.

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## INTRODUCTION

Colleges of business typically seek professional accreditation to achieve legitimacy and raise their reputations (Istieulova, & Peljhan, 2013, 2015). All three of the major U.S. business school accreditors (AACSB, ACBSP, and IACBE) base their accreditation standards on college-created mission statements and consider a mission statement an essential component of a school's application (Palmer & Short, 2008). This paper describes how a Christian business school developed its mission statement as both a response to accreditation standards and as a catalyst for spiritual transformation.

It includes the evolution of the college's mission statement and specific manifestations of this mission. The new mission statement, "Develop business leaders who embrace the values and virtues of Jesus," is now being inculcated through the college's curricular and co-curricular activities.

This paper includes five sections: First, a review of the extant literature addresses mission statements in business school accreditation. Next, the authors describe the developmental path taken in writing the new mission statement. The final three sections highlight how three intentional initiatives: Business as Mission (BAM), Servant Leadership, and Service Learning were inserted into the college's operation.

## MISSION STATEMENTS

When business schools apply for accreditation, one of the necessary ingredients is an appealing and actionable mission statement (Palmer & Short, 2008). This is evident in the standards of the three major U.S. business school accreditors:

1. AACSB: the word “mission” appears 221 times in the 61-page standards document. Notably, Standard 1 states: The school articulates a clear and distinctive **mission**, the expected outcomes this mission implies, and strategies outlining how these outcomes will be achieved. The school has a history of achievement and improvement and specifies future actions for continuous improvement and innovation consistent with this mission, expected outcomes, and strategies. [MISSION, IMPACT, AND INNOVATION] (AACSB, 2017, p. 16)
2. ACBSP: the word “mission” appears 75 times in the 77-page standards document. Notably, ACBSP sees its vision as an accreditor focused around a commitment to “mission-based” accreditation:
 

ACBSP will realize its vision by being committed to **mission-based** accreditation, which serves the dual role of promoting accountability (i.e., assuring multiple audiences that member programs are meeting acceptable standards of excellence, academic quality, and integrity) and promoting continuous academic improvements (i.e., assisting institutions to improve the quality of education and services). (AACSB, 2017, p. 16)
3. IACBE: the word “mission” appears 60 times in its 30-page self-study manual. Standard 2 states:
 

The academic business unit has a clearly defined **mission** and broad-based goals that are consistent with those of the institution.

The academic business unit strives for higher levels of overall performance consistent with its **mission** as reflected in its student learning outcomes, operational effectiveness, and the accomplishment of its mission and broad-based goals. (IACBE, 2016, p. 2)

A review of these three accreditors’ standards reflects several purposes to a mission statement in a business school. First, mission statements reflect a college’s level of “accountability” among its varied constituents (e.g., students,

employers and donors). Palmer and Short (2008) make this clear in their exploration of 408 AACSB schools. They see mission statements in the current climate of accountability in higher education “as a critical starting point for strategic management” (p. 456). Mission statements emerge as colleges seek to either differentiate themselves or, in some cases, to conform to the missions of respected peers.

Second, the mission statement reflects strategic outcomes the college deems important. Often, a college of business’ mission statement will specify performance levels that hallmark goals that programs and initiatives are intended to achieve. Although there is some debate as to whether the presence of mission statements results in higher performance in organizations in general, Palmer and Short (2008) demonstrate a statistically significant correlation for colleges of business. At the very least, they argue mission statements often lay out legitimate outcomes including academic excellence, social awareness, global education, and development of team skills that are generally accepted as aspirational goals.

Third, mission statements form a connection between the university’s overall mission and the specific work of a business school and its faculty and staff (Welsh & Carraher, 2009). Further, mission statements ensure alignment between external stakeholders (such as employers) and the work of the business school. Palmer and Short (2008) address this linkage by referring to strategy literature by Shirley (1983) and Pearce and David (1987). In these works, mission statements are shown to be one of the six main strategic variables of an organization and that mission statements may serve one or more of eight potential functions: 1) identification of target customers and markets; 2) principal products or services; 3) geographic domain; 4) use of technology; 5) commitment to growth, survival, and profitability; 6) key elements of the organizational philosophy; 7) the organization’s self-concept; and 8) the organization’s desired public image.

Based on a review of 408 mission statements from AACSB business schools, Palmer and Short (2008) use these eight purposes to classify business school missions into four groups: smaller private, larger research, smaller public, and urban public. They found on average mission statements include four of the eight purposes, although schools in the four groups used different sets of purposes. For example, urban public schools tended to focus on desired public image and geographic domain. Of interest to this work, smaller private schools most closely fit the circumstances of many Christian business schools. Among these institutions, a full 82 out of 98 featured mission statements speak to “identification of the school’s self-concept” and 66 out of 98 included “key elements of school philosophy.”

### PATH TO A NEW MISSION

The path to a new mission for the College of Business at Lipscomb University begins with a rich story of the faith and vision of David Lipscomb, a man who was not only faith-focused, but in 1891, was future-focused. His primary intention was that the institution would not be a seminary but rather an exceptional educational institution that would also enable students to explore and form their faith. He envisioned a school in Nashville offering an education in a Christian context. Lipscomb's personal example gives some insight into how he defined this Christian context. His life was one that exemplified a faith embodied in all facets of his life, both personal and professional. Our later discussion of business as mission, servant leadership, and service learning naturally connect to the life of David Lipscomb.

The Lipscomb family owned a large farm requiring extensive manual labor. However, faith led the family in 1834 to move to Illinois and then Indiana just to free their slaves that could not be freed in Kentucky. His faith was tested when a cholera epidemic broke out in Nashville in 1873 with more than 1,000 deaths, especially among African Americans. David Lipscomb remained in Nashville to serve the sick. His buggy carried the women of the Roman Catholic "Sisters of Mercy" as well as the Dominican order to their destinations, and he himself cared for the sick and dying. Lipscomb was disturbed that so many people fled the city rather than staying to minister to the sick and needy. In this moment, ecclesiological differences were transcended by acts of mercy across economic and racial barriers (Hicks, 2011).

Lipscomb's example of living out his faith in all facets of his life led him to establish a school that contrasted with the acquisitive ethics that often define institutions of higher learning at that time. At some schools, the dollar was sovereign and privilege was favored. Such schools wanted graduates who exhibited a "proper conformity to the conventionalities of society," and would establish themselves as among society's fittest, cozying up to some of the notorious robber barons of the era. Instead, Lipscomb desired a school where students and faculty would be relentlessly inquisitive and unapologetically rigorous, one that taught that disciples have one vocation: fidelity to the Kingdom of God (Harp, 2015). Notably to this paper, Lipscomb sought to "differentiate" the institution he founded and not to "conform" to social norms.

David Lipscomb College (later renamed University in 1988) continued growing from humble circumstances to the current day. The first evidence of business courses in the curriculum came in 1917. These developed into a

department of business and, with university status, a College of Business. At the time of this writing, the college enrolls approximately 700 students, 500 at the undergraduate level and 200 at the graduate level.

Now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Lipscomb University College of Business has accepted David Lipscomb's challenge. For many years and in many settings, the vocation of business has been presented within a silo, with any responsibility to the Kingdom of God resting in the College of Bible and Theology. In March 2013, the College of Business Leadership Team had a broad discussion of what it meant to integrate Christian faith into business. A few months later, business faculty completed a survey evaluating the status of the existing strategic plan. From these two events, the college began to discuss the idea of Christian business becoming a greater part of its mission with the various College of Business boards. Faculty developed a draft mission and strategy, and the college leadership team began to "socialize" the mission as "virtues and values" with various stakeholders. Faculty was again surveyed on its collective view of the mission, and in December 2013, the college unanimously adopted the new mission statement: "The College of Business will develop business leaders who embrace the values and virtues of Jesus."

The mission of the college is to encourage the adoption of five targeted values and virtues. To the extent that the mission is accomplished in an individual—be they student or otherwise—that person will become more "purposeful," "bold," "credible," "creative," and "servant-minded." The college mission statement was inspired by the words of Psalm 78:72: "And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them" (NIV). Lipscomb strives to be a business college that prepares students for the demands of the business environment, but that also integrates that preparation with the essence of Christian faith.

Having developed a mission statement and a set of values, the obvious question becomes: "So how are the mission and values manifested in the on-going work of the college?" There are many examples to give, but three that stand out are the college's course and co-curricular work on business as mission, its coursework on servant leadership and its university's focus on service learning. The following sections speak to each in turn.

### BUSINESS AS MISSION (BAM)

Likely, the most significant manifestation of the College's new mission is seen in business as mission (BAM), an emerging term that can be difficult to capture

in academic literature and a challenge to implement. This is partially because the two subjects being integrated (business and mission) are so vast. Indeed, there are realms of theology devoted to the redemption of “work,” social justice, and economic care. Similarly, business is a discipline with multiple streams of methodology and theory ranging from entrepreneurship to executive leadership. Nonetheless, BAM has become a common theme throughout the college as it seeks to develop its students.

### **BAM Literature**

One of the challenges then is to utilize literature and praxis that facilitate the integration, and even the tension, of these two disciplines. BAM literature should show how these unique disciplines can share the same trajectory as opposed to the more traditional view that pits them against, and even at odds, with one another.

BAM, at its core, is real business. This means business that is sustainable, viable, profitable, and successful. When integrating business and mission, an inevitable tension arises that asks questions such as: Can a business that operates with multiple bottom lines, beyond profit margins and maximizing shareholder value, be sustainable? If so, is this really business? Is it wise, or even possible, to combine real business and real mission in the same effort?

Together, business and mission seek to address these questions by applying a theological framework. This framework is unique in that it looks at sustainability for both business and mission *simultaneously*. It is a narrative approach rooted in the Creation story of the Bible, where “work” was deemed “good” and stewardship and co-creation was part of the original plan. It is a story with a redemptive trajectory. This narrative invites a holistic empowerment measured by a holistic metric. In that sense, effective BAM literature should focus on both real business and real mission.

Understandably, the reality is that much of the literature on BAM focuses more heavily on one than the other. Mark Russell’s book (2010), *The Missional Entrepreneur*, provides a healthy theological framework that introduces key concepts and themes, primarily from within the text of Scripture, with the occasional modern-day example to illustrate. For example, Russell devotes an entire section to examining the apostle Paul as a missional entrepreneurial tentmaker. Along the way, Russell offers “how to” examples when it comes to starting a business. He does this as a survey of principles rather than a startup manual for how to create missional business.

As a side note, “tentmaker” is a term generally used to either describe a way of gaining access to a closed nation or to the day-to-day work of an individual in his or her

vocational context. The consensus in BAM literature is that “tent-making” is problematic, and even harmful, when used covertly as a means of entering a closed access nation. BAM literature predominantly sides with the opinion represented by Kelly Malone (2014) that BAM should be practiced “as a means of contextualization, portraying in various contexts what it means to follow Christ.”

C. Neal Johnson’s work (2009), *Business As Mission*, provides an exhaustive look at existing missional businesses while also devoting focus to the BAM movement as a historical revolution. Johnson aptly provides key terminology, key leaders, and differing models in a textbook-like approach that brings shape, form, and definition to what has mostly been an elusive, and somewhat fragmented, movement that has not yet been well-articulated or defined as a whole and in context. Johnson’s vast work demonstrates the sheer magnitude of the business as mission discussion. Theological framework and “how to” is present, but the definition and trajectory of the movement remain at the forefront.

The tension with BAM is also seen in the nonprofit vs. for-profit discussion. As Steven Rundle (2014) points out, even within small missional businesses there are two approaches on a spectrum. One is donor-dependent. This model relies upon an externally funded revenue stream given to the business to assist with overhead costs in order to maximize profits. In contrast, the for-profit missional business model operates with the same assumptions as any business. This model seeks to be fully sustainable, maximizing profits through traditional business practices and through multiple revenue streams, rather than donations.

This highlights the need for sustainable businesses that operate in harmony with sustainable missions. In other words, businesses that do not just operate “as” mission but that operate out of the belief that the business “is” mission. A business with a BAM outlook not only creates a revenue stream to practice sustainable mission, it sees mission as being lived out through the way each branch of the business conducts itself: the way it deals with its employees, serves its customers, creates its products, provides its services, creates its jobs, makes its decisions, and creates a healthy atmosphere for all who come in contact with it.

### **BAM in the College of Business**

The Lipscomb College of Business made the bold decision to create a center that focuses directly on educating and equipping students to think about business as mission. The Center for BAM focuses on fully sustainable business and fully sustainable mission. This center has become a global and local resource to help train aspiring entrepreneurs as a means of breaking poverty cycles and developing sustainable

opportunity. In the campus classroom experience, Lipscomb students are exposed to BAM in their first required business course, *An Entrepreneur's Introduction to Business*, where they are given a framework for practicing business utilizing the values and virtues of Jesus and where they are also exposed to a very practical opportunity to empower others. These freshman and sophomore students are often initially surprised to see that business can be practiced as a force for good in the world. Many come in with the expectation that business and mission are to be compartmentalized and that they are even potentially at odds with one another. Indeed, some students even seem to suspect that the goal of a business school is to effectively train new recruits for evil corporations. Swanson and Frederick (2015) note this in their essay that asks, "Are business schools silent partners in corporate crime?"

BAM is not forced upon students, but they are exposed to it and offered an invitation to consider its implications upon all aspects of business. Integrating the values and virtues of Jesus are not as difficult as one might think because as McMahon (2006) suggests, "there is such a close relationship between leadership and Christian principles that they make a very nice combination for a class" (p. 28). These foundations are built upon to create, launch, and manage student-run businesses that learn to operate not just ethically, but to also incorporate great intentionality. The required *An Entrepreneur's Introduction to Business* class teaches these values and virtues, the lean startup method, and basic principles of business by having students divide into teams of 5-6 to develop a lean canvas, design a Minimum Viable Product (MVP), and begin the process of validated learning by creating fully-operating student-run businesses. Each team is given a \$200 startup capital loan and is commissioned to run a real, profit-generating business throughout the semester.

Students form businesses and are presented with specific opportunities to empower poor, aspiring entrepreneurs who are trapped in poverty cycles because of limited access to resources such as opportunity and startup capital. It is often assumed that poverty is addressed by "teaching a man to fish," but the reality is that most know how to fish. They already possess a skill or a talent. What they lack is access to the pond (Seebeck, 2009). This is where student entrepreneurs learning business are invited to make a significant impact. All profits earned for the semester become startup capital for an aspiring, marginalized entrepreneur. This startup capital provides empowerment. This empowerment provides access. And this access creates opportunity. Quite simply, students are invited to create and run a sustainable business that will create sustainable mission. In essence, they are turning profit into hope for people in need.

Most students, even if they have no faith context, become motivated beyond the "bottom line" of a high grade for the semester. They learn the stories of those they are helping and they talk with their potential customers about the impact their profits can make. They also quickly learn that BAM is not only good mission, but it is good business. Of global consumers polled in 2015 by Cone Communications, 90% stated they would consider switching brands if presented with a brand that made a social impact. This is validated in the tremendous success students experience in creating excellent products and services in harmony with a powerful missional impact. The typical class for *An Entrepreneur's Introduction to Business* averages 70 students. These students form 12-15 business teams. The teams then generate an average profit of more than \$4,000, with the highest semester on record earning just shy of \$6,000.

To date, these funds have been used to empower aspiring entrepreneurs in Jamaica and Kenya who already know "how to fish" but are now being given access to the pond through education and capital. More opportunities in more locations, both locally and globally, are forthcoming. These new opportunities range from assisting local immigrants and refugees, to helping start a coffee shop in Thailand, to helping start a cookie company in southern Brazil, to working with female entrepreneurs in Malindi, Kenya. It is important to note that students are doing more than just generating startup capital for these efforts. They are invited to work directly alongside these aspiring, marginalized entrepreneurs to teach them basic business principles, help them with their business ideas, and then physically work alongside them to open the businesses. This is offered through specific on-site work and internships.

Many students naturally become interested in pursuing BAM further, and they can do so through a minor in BAM and experiential opportunities provided by the Center for BAM. The BAM minor is comprised of classes such as *Principles of Business As Mission*, *Social Entrepreneurship*, and *Creativity* that more fully expose them to theological, social, and missional business principles. Students study global problems and learn to develop sustainable solutions by developing missional business models. As an example, one of the most recent classes developed a leather journal business that supports education in one of the local prisons for women while also providing jobs for local refugee women. Lipscomb's College of Business is helping raise up a new generation of business leaders and entrepreneurs who will practice business and embody mission—simultaneously, harmoniously, and with sustainable impact that has the potential to make lasting change, one transaction at a time.

## SERVANT LEADERSHIP

A second College of Business initiative aimed at developing business leaders “who embrace the values and virtues of Jesus” is enacted via an academic courses entitled Servant Leadership. In these courses, leadership is taught in an atypical way. That is because most college students (and older adults) see the two terms “leader” and “servant” as opposites. The former implies a bold, inspiring, and accomplished person, whereas the latter connotes a meek, humble, and subordinate individual. Yet, the Bible teaches its followers to think quite differently about a servant’s role. Followers of Christ are reminded that when one person does a good deed for another, the act is, in reality, in the name of Jesus. Indeed, Matthew 25:6 informs, “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me’” (NIV).

### *Academic Framework for Servant Leadership*

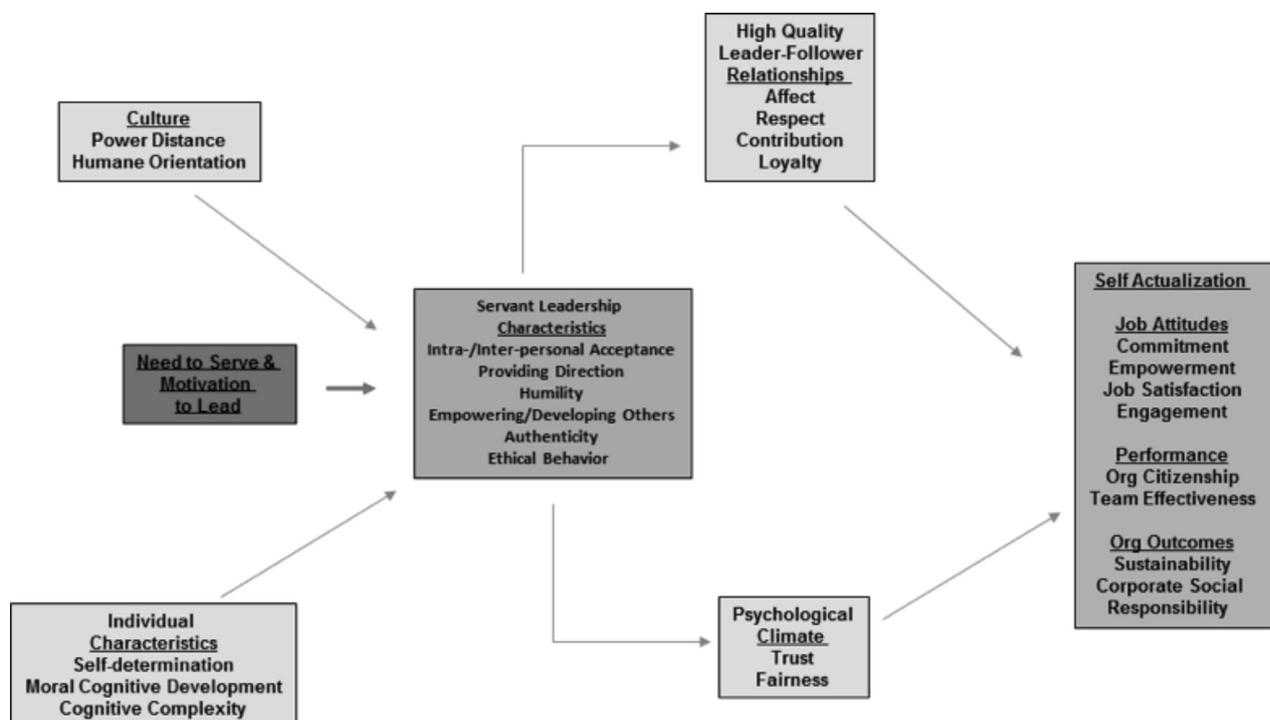
Warren Bennis and James O’Toole (2005) wrote, “Either by doing too few of the right things or too many of the wrong ones, critics argue that business schools do a disservice to students, organizations, and society by churning out graduates who are ill-prepared to lead” (p. 626). It is highly probable that across the globe, academic institutions place a great deal of effort in teaching the basic concepts of leadership. In many environments, faculty members pos-

sessing a command of the research literature impart leadership principles to their students. The typical focus is on the basic principles of planning, organizing, communicating, decision-making, and problem-solving. The emphasis is on the theoretical underpinnings of leadership. Other institutions take an entirely different approach. These schools insist upon using the expertise of clinical and/or adjunct faculty members possessing extremely practical skills and, therefore, the impetus is to transform the academic institution into a higher-fidelity leadership laboratory.

In Lipscomb’s College of Business courses, both approaches are embraced. But teaching the integration of students’ faith into their professional lives is complicated by the evolutionary changes in postmodern views of Christianity. Today’s students’ faith is very different from previous generations’ beliefs about the meanings and daily manifestations of biblical Scripture. That is, according to McMahon, Locke, and Roller (2015):

If we are to teach them to effectively integrate faith with business, it can only be authentic when it is their own fit and not some stylized version of our faith that they do not, and will not, embrace. To accomplish our mission, we must understand their faith and how it may differ from our own. We must re-examine their learning needs and be prepared to adapt our teaching focus to meet those needs. (p. 108)

Figure 1: Servant Leadership Model (based on Dirk van Dierendonck (2011))



During the early stages of Servant Leadership courses, students are introduced to the writings of the “Father of Servant Leadership,” Robert Greenleaf. In the now famous essay *The Servant as Leader* (1977) he stated:

The servant leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first. The best test is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit or at least not be further deprived? (p. 6)

Further, the academic experience is highly influenced by the work of Dirk van Dierendonck. In *Servant Leadership: A Review and Synthesis* (2011), the author conducted a meta-analysis of seven studies published between 1999 and 2011. Each of these studies cited differing servant leader characteristics and behaviors. The empirical analysis yielded six independent servant leader constructs: 1) Empowering and Developing People, 2) Humility, 3) Authenticity, 4) Interpersonal Acceptance, 5) Providing Direction, and 6) Stewardship. These six are affectionately referred to as “The Big 6” during the course. Also, Dierendonck’s (2011) rich, full conceptual model (p. 1233) includes antecedents and outcomes for the six servant leader behaviors (See Figure 1). Each of these are highlighted and emphasized throughout the semester (see figure 1).

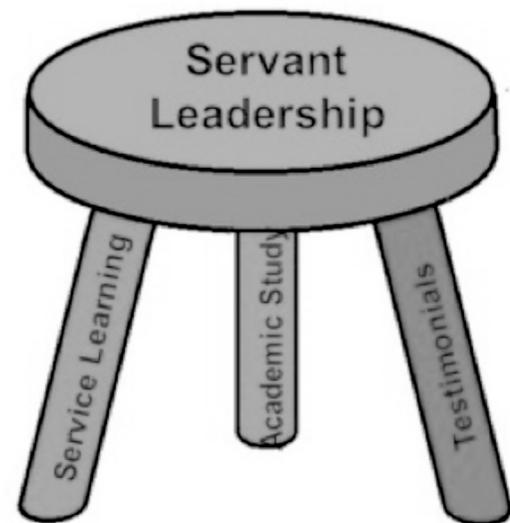
### ***Servant Leadership Courses in the College of Business***

Growing leaders who exemplify the virtues and values of Jesus are operationalized in Lipscomb’s College of Business Servant Leadership course. This course is offered in two formats. The first is an eight-week seminar platform, designed primarily for students majoring in management. The second is a traditional semester-long, three-hours-per-week format. Students from across the university are invited to take this course as it fulfills both a Bible and general education requirement.

Figure two highlights the three highly interactive experiences (academic concepts, testimonials, and service learning) that are the basis for the pedagogical design of both the eight- and full-semester offerings.

Basic knowledge foundational to understanding the critical components of servant leadership is distributed in the “Academic Concepts” portion of the course. These core competencies are reinforced by the second portion, “Real-life Testimonials.” Guest speakers and panels of seasoned leaders participate in lively discussions with students

**Figure 2: Servant Leadership Stool**



as they relate experiences and offer counsel on leadership actions proven to be both successful and unsuccessful. The third portion of the servant leader experience is “Service Learning.” Students are asked to volunteer 15 hours helping at agencies in the metropolitan region. Most often, the required tasks and environments in which the volunteer activities are completed prove to be quite challenging for the students.

Early in the course, a valuable exercise involves a professor-facilitated activity in which students are asked to initially list words that describe the term “leader.” The same practice is followed for the word “servant.” Each time, a few minutes are devoted to listening to students talk about their understanding and use of these terms. Concurrently, the two lists are recorded for all to see. Not surprisingly, two distinct thought-camps are evident. Truthfully, no one suspects the revelation that occurs when the professor switches the terms at the tops of each list. “Servant” becomes “Leader” and “Leader” becomes “Servant.” Several seconds of silence typically ensue. Because this classroom activity occurs inside the milieu of a Christian classroom, absolute meaning is not fleeting for most of the students. In fact, if the head nods that follow are an indication, persistent frames for viewing the dynamics about leadership begin shifting at that moment.

As stated above, the early focus in these courses includes introduction, recitation, and testing on Greenleaf’s writings. This simple exercise is a tremendous aid in helping students grasp what his statements intend: “The servant leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first.” The activity ends with rather lengthy exchanges about how differently dyadic, group, and organizational leadership relationships might be if only leaders

would inculcate this phenomenon into the way they treat others while leading.

While the Big 6 servant leader characteristics serve as the foundation for the course, the full model is addressed during the ensuing weeks in the semester. Servant leader behavior produces amazing results, such as high-quality leader-follower relationships, trust, fairness, corporate social responsibility, organizational commitment, and engagement. Scholarly texts, articles, and diverse electronic resource platforms are used to provide students with interesting and insightful learning opportunities. Of course, they are highly pleased with the requisite forms of multiple-choice, essay, and hybrid forms of testing. Actually, the performance criterion is quite high for the vast majority of students.

### *Servant Leadership Testimonials*

“A picture is worth a thousand words” and “Seeing is believing.” Both of these adages are taken to heart and highly valued as each of the Big 6 Servant Leader traits (Dirk van Dierendonck, 2011), and behaviors are placed in plain view for students through invited guest speakers/lecturers and expert panelists. Diverse guests—male and female, from varied age and ethnic backgrounds, from the wealthy to the homeless, and from both ministerial and business backgrounds—are all unplugged. Each guest is invited to address a specific Big 6 trait/behavior during his or her visit. For example, a CEO might talk about “providing direction” and the critical nature of establishing a vision, mission, goals, and objectives. Amazing candor is present as successes and failures are detailed. Similarly, the spouse of a youth group leader may speak about his or her less visible role. The spouse may not be in the more celebrated position of standing in a pulpit and talking publicly about the dangers young people face at home, at school, and in social settings. Yet, he or she can boldly make a difference in others’ lives through the display of humility, authenticity, and interpersonal acceptance. Servant leaders are servants first.

These opportunities are priceless as students have unparalleled exposure to experts and to learn about the struggles and joys associated with positions of leadership, no matter the compensation or recognition level. The discourse provides fodder for reflection and sense-making. Students are challenged to imagine their futures and to begin preparing to make a difference immediately upon graduation. Often, testimonials include a short walk through the chronology of events that led to each person arriving in the classroom that day. All guests are unique and contribute in so many ways. However, the testimonials of Christian leaders who have been highly successful in reaching organizational goals seem to be the most beneficial. Indeed, in a *Christian*

*Business Academy Review* article entitled, “Engaging Business Practitioners to Develop Students’ Faith and Talents,” Richard Wallace (2010) stated, “When we bring Christian business leaders to our campuses and classes, our students stand to gain not only good business advice but insight into the will and personality of God” (p. 24).

### SERVICE LEARNING

Arguably, the most valuable leg to the Lipscomb College of Business’s mission and values comes through the university’s focus on service learning. Required of all undergraduates at Lipscomb University and referred to as SALT (Serving and Learning Together), students are allowed to choose where they will serve and for which types of jobs/tasks they will engage. The SALT graduation requirement is two-fold. First, students must complete a SALT-enabled course (such as Servant Leadership and select other College of Business courses), which includes a minimum of fifteen hours of service with at least three visits to the agency they serve. Second, students must participate in a level-one activity with four hours of service (selected from a list of projects each term). This is a one-time service opportunity that, again, pairs service with a learning component.

SALT course requirements come with some sacrifice. University students are busy and finding time to serve is difficult. Ironically, the initial class announcement about this requirement is typically met with some groans and moans. But in the end, students rate this experience high. They self-select into the organizations and the types of jobs/tasks they will perform. Many choose to serve at non-profit organizations that offer food, clothing, and shelter to the homeless and needy. Others volunteer to be tutors and mentors for special needs persons. Recently, several students learned to procure and cook healthy, nutrient-rich food for cancer patients and their supporting (exhausted) family members.

Often, students do not really understand what they are getting themselves into. But, the experiences can be quite humbling. Wiping saliva from a child’s mouth just does not enter into the realm of imagination for many of the students. Washing feet and perhaps, laundering extremely soiled clothes for the homeless are among the lesser-enjoyed tasks. Even tutoring academically and behaviorally challenged young people can be a huge stretch for the inexperienced community volunteer. But amazingly, most students overcome the initial challenges (whatever they may be) and learn to serve. At the end of the Servant Leadership course, students must write a detailed reflection paper, capturing how one or all of the Big 6 Servant Leader Characteristics were exemplified in their service experience.

Amazing transformations take place. Students write about their initial fears and resulting joys. They develop deep relationships with the individuals and agencies they serve. Real meaning about the word “service” is determined. Not every student obtains a “leadership” role during his or her service opportunity. Yet, unequivocally, they experience Greenleaf's (1977) tenet (1977):

Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit or at least not be further deprived? (p. 6)

Many of those served by the students in Servant Leadership courses are the least privileged in society. Through learning to accept the less fortunate as they are, students gain a measure of humility, authenticity, a desire to empower and develop others, and stewardship with their time.

Finally, the impact in the community is phenomenal. For example, a recent SALT-enabled Servant Leadership class averaged 780 hours of service. At minimum wage (\$7.25/hour), the economic value is \$5,655 per course. Students take great pride in their individual and collective contributions. Similar results are seen in the freshman entrepreneurial introduction course and courses throughout the university's many colleges.

### CONCLUSION

Given their formative role in the development of business leaders, business schools have a critical role in developing business leaders. The missions of these schools historically have sought academic excellence, social awareness, global education, and team skills, often in a “sea of sameness” (Bissoux, 2003). Christian business schools, however, have a unique opportunity to differentiate themselves by bringing students to see their lives as mission, shaped by the values and virtues of Jesus. In particular, this paper focused on a U.S. Christian business school as it developed a new mission statement and inculcated it with three significant manifestations: Business as Mission, Servant Leadership courses, and Service Learning (SALT). This transformation demonstrates how business educators can help students successfully join faithful living with effective business leadership.

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