

# Mainstreaming: Watching, Wading, and Swimming

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## The Tensions

What does it mean to be a Christian professor? My answer to this question is not merely academic, nor entirely personal. It will energize my efforts and order my priorities. It will impact the balance I seek between teaching and researching, between school and home and church. Beyond my personal take on things, my definition will have an impact on the way I define my role(s) in my department. It will influence my views toward appropriate course loads, the kinds of projects I may be willing to engage in with colleagues, and my perspective on service to my university in terms of task forces and committees.

I've lately had to reexamine my own answer to "What does it mean to be a Christian professor?" Cedarville College will become Cedarville University by the time this issue of the **JBIB** is published. Discussions about the "designator" change have been going on for almost two years, and a significant part of the discussion is whether the

designator change recognizes what we already have become as an academic community or what we aspire to move toward. At heart, the question has been "What does it mean to be a Christian university?" Along with this change, I have been a part of "giving birth" to graduate programs at Cedarville University. As director of graduate programs, I have worked with many different campus groups as we wrestled with the impact of graduate programs and the degree to which the creation of such programs would signal a redefinition of our university's primary calling to be an undergraduate teaching arena. Finally, my own department has been engaged in a series of long and challenging discussions about the costs/benefits of seeking national accreditation for our business program. Here, too, we have wrestled with clarifying our vision and values.

All three arenas of change have focused my attention on issues of personal and community identity and priority. What does it mean to be a Christian professor

at a Christian university?  
How can I think and pray through the tensions and opportunities presented to me and to my colleagues?

### A Model

Being the visual thinker that I am, I created a model to help me work through my own responses to the changes of which I am a part (Figure 1).

I teach management courses with a special focus on strategic planning. The “field” of strategic management is really a moving, turbulent stream of discussion and

debate carried out in journals, meetings, the popular press, Internet sites, professional consulting, and many other arenas. The discussion and debate focuses on matters of vision and values reflected in various models and theories (what I’ve termed the “philosophical” issues), matters of improvement of actual business practices, and matters dealing with pedagogical concerns related to the processes of teaching and learning.

My roles relative to this stream are as teacher and scholar. As a teacher my role is to

interpret the discussion and debate going on in my field of strategic management and to direct part of the stream to my students. That direction is accomplished through the way my course is structured, the textbook and other resources I make available to my students, the course assignments, and any technology-mediated resources I use in class (computer simulations, threaded discussions/chat rooms, etc.) An important part of my teacher role is to interpret ideas from the stream in order to make them more accessible to my students.

As a scholar, my opportunity is to participate in the actual stream of discussion and debate in my field. One way to do this is to be an active researcher and publisher, investigating either new ideas or investigating possible variants and extensions of existing ideas. This can be done in various contexts (journals, professional meetings) and at various levels (Class “A” journals, regional meetings). This role dimension places me as a contributing participant in the stream, adding my investigation and ideas to build the “body of knowledge” in my field.

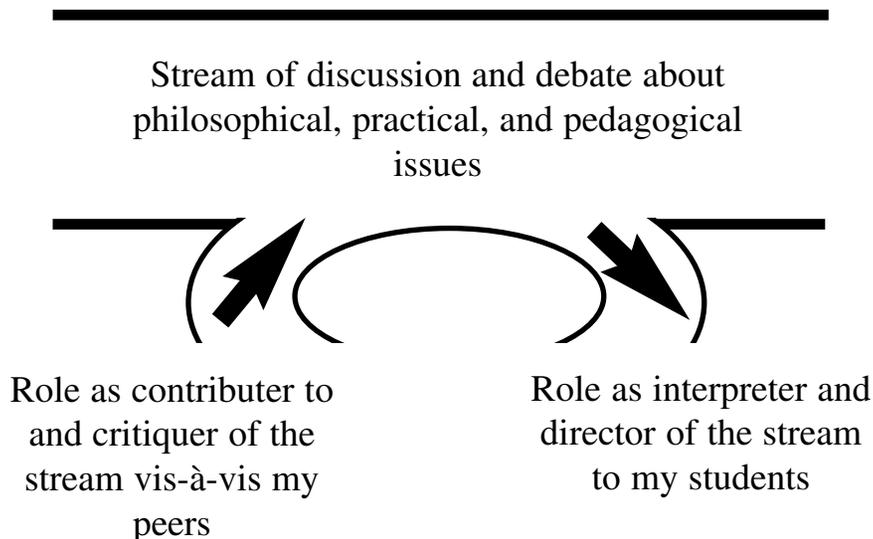
A second dynamic of the participant role, and one which I

think may have particular interest for faith-informed concerns, would be that of critiquer of the stream. In academia this role is played out in various ways: manuscript reviewers, writing of rejoinders, and even original pieces of writing that focus on weaknesses or gaps in existing theories and models. As a Christian scholar in strategic management, one of my roles may well be to highlight areas where certain business assumptions, say about competition, may well be at variance to biblical principles or precepts. As I look back upon the first five issues of the **JBIB**, I see a number of instances where this role as challenger of the “status quo” of scholarship in various fields of business has been assumed by the writers published in the **JBIB**.

### Two Questions—Many Possible Answers

Given this overall framework of scholarly/teaching roles, I’d like to note a variety of challenges we all face as we seek to answer the question “What does it mean to be a Christian professor?” I’d like to portray these challenges in the form of two questions.

Figure 1



**As a Christian professor, are my roles as both a participant in the stream and as a director of that stream to my students in congruence or in conflict?** At first thought the answer to this question might be “obviously yes.” Who would be in a better position to interpret and direct the discussion and debate in their field than someone who was actively involved as a contributor to the stream? The research process would seem to broaden and deepen one’s awareness about the issues in one’s field of study. But consider this—what if my own research, in order to be published, follows a pretty narrow “slice” of the whole set of issues in the stream? What if my own research colors my reading of the whole stream so that everything becomes interpreted in ways that reflect my own particular and narrow “take” on things? And, what if my particular slice of research has little to do with what I teach at all? Consider also matters from a resource context. What if the time it takes to do research takes away time (or energy or creative commitment) from my teaching role? What about the resource issue “on the margin”? That is, what happens if I am deciding to spend five extra hours in research

vs. five extra hours in course preparation? What would I determine to be the most desirable investment? *My point most broadly is that it is very possible that my roles as participant in the stream and as a director of that stream to my students probably result in both congruencies and conflicts which must be weighed both individually and in terms of the collegiate community in which I participate.*

**As a Christian professor, am I obliged to be both a participant in the stream and a director of that stream to my students?** This question speaks to the moral imperatives of my decision to become a Christian professor. The answer to this question is complex because it involves the interplay of such factors as my own professional aspirations, my institution’s direction and support, and my sense of divine calling. The answer is complicated even further by the notion that at different times in my life I might come to different answers (my professional aspirations when I first began teaching in 1976 were different from what they are today). And, we can complicate the answer even more by noting that my sense of “obligation” is

informed by different and often competing voices: professional associations, tenure committee expectations, and times in prayer as I seek God’s direction. *Here, my point would be that choices about “obligation” are inherently complex and intensely individualized.*

### **Continuing the Discussion and Dialogue**

I now teach at Cedarville University, we offered our first graduate courses this summer (of 2000), and our business department has decided to continue to move ahead in the accrediting process. In truth, we are not certain where any of these initiatives will ultimately take us. What is certain is that we shall be different in ways that are both intentional and unintentional. Our future is a matter of 1) targeting our expectations and directing our energies toward those expectations, and 2) dealing with the inevitable surprises (both pleasing and dismaying) that our efforts to attain our expectations will bring.

On a personal level I am committed to being both a participant in the stream of discussion and debate in my academic field and a teacher developing courses that allow my

students to better understand the issues of my field. I believe that the roles are congruent, but come with a cost. I have found no easy way to achieve a balance in my life as I juggle the demands of scholar, teacher, husband, father, church member, and community contributor. What I have found is that increasing amounts of prayer time have become critical as I seek God’s wisdom. The questions are hard; the answers are difficult. I want to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (II Corinthians 10:5, NIV), and be careful that I “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but [am] ... transformed by the renewing of [my] ... mind” (Romans 12:2, NIV).

### **This Issue of the JBIB**

This sixth issue of the **JBIB** is dedicated to remaining a forum for Christian faculty to be participants in the discussions and debates related to the connections between business philosophy and practice and the truth of God’s Word.

This issue is especially exciting because we are addressing issues of philosophy, practice, and pedagogy. We lead with a section on the important concept of servant-leadership.

In “The Importance of Leader Visibility in Servant-Leadership,” Tucker et al. explore the connection between leader visibility (defined as the public presence, behavior, and interactions of a leader with followers, whether before a large organization or a small group) and servant-leadership. It describes servant-leadership, reviews leader visibility literature, and constructs a theoretical model that graphically illustrates the interrelationship of the two areas. A second article, written partly in response to Tucker et al.’s piece, is “Stewardship-Leadership: A Biblical Refinement of Servant-Leadership” written by Nicholas A. Beadles. Beadles reviews the current thought on servant-leadership and questions whether servant-leadership is a sufficiently unique approach to leadership to warrant thinking of it as a “biblical” approach to leadership. He also offers a revision of the theory which might bring the theory into better alignment with the Scriptures. Included in this section are responses to Beadles’ article by Brian Porter and Virgil Smith. The articles in this section offer a variety of ideas, and their references and footnotes offer those interested an opportunity to

explore the idea of servant-leadership.

We follow this leadership section with a special section on applied biblical interpretation. The lead article is “Hermeneutics and Biblical Ethics: — An Illustration — God’s Immutability and Human Integrity” by Richard Chewning. In his article Chewning raises significant theological questions:

*Is God a learner? Has He ever learned anything? Does God ever forget anything? Does God ever change His mind, about anything or anybody, for any reason? For example, does prayer change God’s mind? God has a will, but does He ever modify it? How about God’s “emotions,” like His jealousy and wrath; do they fluctuate and change with circumstances?* (p. 50)

Accompanying the article are several response pieces that help place Chewning’s ideas into a business practice context.

This article is followed by a wonderful piece related to course pedagogy. Over the years of editing the **JBIB** it has been my desire to encourage more articles related to the area of teaching, something almost all CBFA

members share in common.

In “An Honors Course in Economic Philosophy and Policy Development,” Douglas Dotterweich details the elements of a course that emphasizes moral philosophy as the foundation for the development of sound economic policy. I am especially excited because Dotterweich teaches at a state university and wrestles with some tensions that may be less prevalent than at private Christian schools.

Adding to the discussion that was initiated in the editor’s introduction to this issue of the **JBIB** is Steven L. Rundle’s article “The Christian Business Scholar and the Great Commission: A Proposal for Expanding the Agenda.” Rundle points to a paradigm shift in missions outreach that focuses on workplace evangelism, and he discusses the possibilities for this development for research, new degree and certificate programs, and new opportunities for business-related field support.

We then follow with the first of what I hope will be an ongoing series of cases developed for readers of the **JBIB**. Niles Logue offered us the opportunity to print his write-up of the New Era Philanthropy situation that had such a dramatic impact on a

variety of Christian and non-Christian institutions (including some of the colleges from which CBFA members come). The case was done in three parts and includes discussion questions for classroom use. I am genuinely excited about the opportunity of providing **JBIB** readers with this case material, and we encourage its use in the classroom (feel free to make copies of the case – be sure to give appropriate credit to Logue and the **JBIB**).

### Some Concluding Thoughts

The **JBIB** was created to offer Christian faculty (at both Christian and secular schools) a resource that might help them grow as both scholars and teachers. The number of manuscripts we receive has increased each year, and for that we are grateful. Let me encourage **you** to become a participant in the stream of discussion and debate the **JBIB** has sought to channel and foster. Your ideas and experiences could make a vital contribution to the stream. I would urge you to become more than a “watcher.” Wade out into the stream, test the water, and link arms with those who are seeking to swim and make a difference. At the back of this issue of the **JBIB** you will find

information about submitting manuscripts for review.

My thanks as always go to the superbly professional public relations staff at Cedarville University, led by Roger Overturf and his assistant, Kara Steinman. Kara's work as technical editor of the **JBIB** and Roger's leadership and encouragement have been indispensable in the production of the journal you are holding in your hands.

Also I want to thank the 41 men and women who currently serve as reviewers for the **JBIB**. Their names are listed at the back of this issue. It is their thorough and constructive insistence on scholarly excellence and biblical faithfulness that have allowed the **JBIB** to grow in its mission.

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