

pathway toward reputable accreditation that is insulated from outside pressures.

“We believe, teach, and confess...” is a repeated phrase throughout the Formula of Concord. What our supporting congregational members believe, what the faculty teach, and what the administration confesses publicly by its formal affiliations must all accord—not merely with one another but most especially with the Word of God. Accreditation at LCC must fit the framework of our confession; our confession must not be altered or muted to conform to wayward accreditation trends.

Accreditation rules prevent more specific information to be shared until LCC’s application is approved. In the meantime, conservative Lutherans will appreciate that LCC’s Board of Regents adopted the current plan together with an exit clause that would urge an alternative if ever the chosen accreditation agency undermines LCC’s scriptural commitments.

At Luther Classical College, we believe, teach, and confess, never equivocating where God has clearly spoken.

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September, 2023



## STARTING OUT RIGHT: ACCREDITATION AND THE BOLD CONFESSION

BY DR. RYAN C. MACPHERSON

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WHEN PEOPLE INQUIRE ABOUT ACCREDITATION for Luther Classical College, they are concerned about two things. They want LCC to be true to the Lutheran Confessions and they also want it to be recognized as a legitimate institution of higher learning—not a Bible college, which may teach sound theology but does not confer liberal arts diplomas, nor a mere diploma mill.

Accreditation is how colleges become certified as genuine. Accreditation agencies exist to assure students that their diplomas mean something and to assure peer institutions that students from one school are worthy to transfer credits or be accepted into graduate programs at another school.

But accreditation brings challenges, too, especially for colleges seeking to remain faithful to Christ. It would be easy to simply follow each new wave of accreditation standards. “Critical thinking” was all the rage thirty years ago. Then came “student-centered learning.” More recently, the words “diversity,” “inclusion,” and “equity” have become the salt and pepper, if not the meat and potatoes, of accreditation standards. Sometimes subtly, sometimes more openly, those faddish slogans steer educational institutions away from the

created order in which God is honored, neighbors are served, and real learning happens.

While most of the new accreditation buzzwords could in theory be used in a manner consistent with a biblical worldview, the social facts reveal how easily a college succumbs to worldview shift. “Critical thinking” may sound synonymous with the classical art of Socratic questioning, but it typically involves a rejection of First and Fourth Commandment authorities and a corresponding exultation of the student’s own subjective feelings. “Student-centered” could simply mean “care about your students,” but implementing “student-centered” practices usually results in a focus on personal viewpoints rather than on objective academic content. (Yes, stock lessons in fostering a student-centered classroom explicitly advise that attention should not be placed on the knowledge of facts, but rather on the inclusion of each person’s unique perspective.) Even more overtly, the DIE acronym serves to reject the Christian teaching that people of all ethnicities share a common humanity—created in God’s image, fallen into sin, and redeemed by Jesus Christ. When “diversity” goes beyond ethnic heritage to include imagined categories of “gender fluidity,” then unlearning has replaced learning and Isaiah’s warning becomes timely again: “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20)

Several accrediting agencies have adopted plans to implement new “diversity” standards in the coming years. Administrators at conservative colleges have pushed back. The outcome of the battle remains to be seen. What sort of documentation will pass muster for standards such as the following, coming from one of the nation’s premier accreditors? “The institution’s processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations.” To some degree, colleges are at the mercy of the site visitation team members—the administrators from sister colleges who on behalf of accrediting agencies evaluate each school that applies for acceptance and periodic renewal. Their interpretations of fungible standards can make or break a college’s standing. Administrators at conservative institutions increasingly worry that they are running out of “wiggle room” in the increasingly paganized accreditation climate.

Meanwhile, to skip accreditation altogether would not be wise either. Lack of accreditation comes at a cost: other colleges, universities, or seminaries that are accredited likely will not recognize an unaccredited college’s diploma as being worth anything. Indeed, their own accreditation status could be jeopardized if they were to regard a transcript from an unaccredited college as if it came from an accredited college. Moreover, an unaccredited college would in some states be prohibited from identifying its diplomas in terms of a “bachelor’s of arts” degree.



Joseph's Promotion. Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, 1794-1872.

Luther Classical College welcomes the opportunity to demonstrate that its courses require academic rigor, that its faculty are well-trained, and that its finances are sustainable. Those are the traditional marks of accreditation.

Luther Classical College also welcomes the opportunity to define its mission as a classical,

Lutheran college and to demonstrate fidelity to that mission. Mission integrity also is a traditional mark of accreditation.

The Board of Regents has acted with cautious investigation in selecting an accreditation agency that will respect, rather than threaten, the college’s biblical commitments. The selected agency has the approval of the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, which means that other reputable colleges and universities should accept LCC’s transcripts for credit transfer and graduate school applications. Indeed, as far as accreditation goes, LCC would be eligible to apply for federal financial aid. However, the college will not do so, lest the “strings” attached to government funding pull the college away from its Christian commitments. The Board is firm and adamant in its opposition to the idea of ever accepting government aid. Meanwhile LCC’s supporters may be thankful that the Regents have found a