



Transcriptions

A Mission to Fulfill: The Future

Ted Ward

Annotation: *Preliminary report to the Executive Board of the Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges (AABC). (AABC now known as Association for Biblical Higher Education) St. Petersburg, Florida, 1997. Used with Permission. Ted Ward presents a hopeful future for Christian higher education—hopeful because leaders seem to be more aware of the bad news. Evaluation is less shoddy, admissions standards are more compatible with mission, and diversity in enrolment is increasing. But significant threats remain. Among them, declining enrolment, increasing costs, and federal regulation in accreditation. He concludes with some preliminary findings from the survey of member schools.*



If you'll allow me, I'd like to just kind of run down a series of generalizations that I have to use as backdrop to how we understand what's going on. First of all, there is some very definite good news in American higher education. Part of it is a growing awareness of the bad news: a growing awareness of failure, a growing awareness of difficulty. But in many higher education institutions, especially in the major universities and in the big state universities, there is a growing concern for improvement and I think this bodes well for the health of higher education in America. We may have gone through our darkest years and we may be turning around.

For example, there is an increasing emphasis on standards and effective evaluation. Much of what we've done in grading, much of what we've done in evaluation, in general, and especially much of what we've done in terms of assessment of the achievement of goals in our institutions has been very shoddy in the last 25 years and I think this—I won't go 25, more like about 18—but right now

I think it's turning around and that's a positive. It gives us a background where the kinds of values and concerns that we have are again becoming more popular and more commonly held.

Admission standards are being more carefully enforced in some schools. Now this is extremely difficult partly because of the first piece of bad news. It's very difficult to uphold tight standards during a time of shrinking enrollment; and the enrollments, in general, are still shrinking. Many people were not aware of it, but 1976 was kind of the high water mark. It's easy to remember because 1976, 200 years after 1776, this nation grew in its educative emphasis for 200 years and now we've been substantially on the wane in virtually all levels of higher education. And I'm speaking here as an American looking at our history, but the Canadian pattern is not terribly different.

At any rate, there is still a general shrinkage in enrollment and one of the ways in which this is showing up is in terms of the racial balance, the ethnic balance, within student enrollments. We are actually *losing* ground in terms of proportions of Black Americans. We are *gaining* ground in terms of Asians, in general, but most—I won't say most—I would say a good half of the Asians that are part of that *gaining* factor are immigrants—not immigrants, but they are visitors, student visitors, from overseas and this certainly affects all higher education. And it is clear in the Bible college movement, as well, that the efforts we've given in the past to recruiting Black Americans are becoming more difficult not easier. And we're going to be needing more and more to call upon the wisdom of the Black community within the AABC and particularly the commission on ethnic diversity to really find ways that we can do something about this because we're trying to move against a population trend in higher education.

Costs are continuing to outstrip the cost of living and I don't think this is apt to turn around for the next 20 years. In fact, it could virtually make higher education an elite commodity. It is clear that, even in Christian colleges, liberal arts colleges, and now Bible colleges, the proportion of children of the wealthy is going up substantially. One of the great features of the Bible colleges in the past is that they were able to deal very broadly with the people in all sorts of socioeconomic strata. This is no longer nearly as easily possible and does make the dependence on outside funding and subordinated and funds, even from the federal agencies, and so forth, much more important if we're going to diversify the populations at all.

The fact that we're beginning to deal more and more with the elite and more and more with the wealthy means that the value systems are apt to be under great pressure. I'll never forget the shock of discovering that one of our leading Christian liberal arts colleges ran into a real flap when one of the political science professors started talking about matters of Christian lifestyle and several of the parents got upset and the president ultimately told his faculty that hereafter there was to be no mentioning of personal lifestyle in any shape or form within that teaching program of that institution. I thought this was one of the most bleak moments in Christian higher education. If we cannot critique things biblically, even if it hurts, then we have to wonder what we're doing here. That was, by the way, not a Bible college.

In terms of the direction of accreditation, there's some good news and bad news. In accreditation, the emphasis is clearly changing from extreme quantification toward a qualitative description; an approach that does not simply count beans and numbers of Ph.D.'s, but counts things that are in the category that sometimes are regarded as soft data: learning to trust judgments

calls, learning to look at the opinions about things rather than simply counting numbers of books in the library and other kinds of artificial things—numbers of steps on the campus sidewalk.

The style is changing in accreditation from judgmental decrees toward a kind of developmental supportive encouragement. One of the reasons that the accreditation associations, the Regionals, are beginning to pick up our Bible colleges to a greater extent is because of that very emphasis right there. If they were to use the old judgmental decree capability, that accreditation always has, many of your institutions wouldn't be in the Regionals. Instead, they're taking a developmental encouragement kind of a stance that says now you may not be all that you want to be; you may not be all *we* want you to be, but we want you onboard because we're going to encourage you to become all *you* want to be and all *we* want to be. And somehow that kind of an attitude is definitely the hallmark of accreditation today and I think evidences that I have discovered in this research suggest that that is not quite as true in the AABC as it is in many other accrediting associations.

Also, the matter of outcomes assessment is, I think, a very strong piece of good news because again it moves us away from looking at hardware—how good does your factory look—to the question of how good is your product. And the kind of emphasis we heard last night—and let's look at product because we've got a lot more to *say* there. We've got a lot more to *prove* there and, as a matter of fact, we have a lot more to be concerned about there. So the issue of shift toward outcomes assessment I think to be a very positive piece of good news.

The bad news here, of course, in its direction of accreditation is that accreditation, especially through the regional agencies, is becoming a tool of federal regulation in the United States. Now I think this is a part of a pattern of increasing federalization of the education system of the nation. I can remember in my own graduate years in the early and middle '50s that this was quite a matter of debate among us promising young scholars in the field of educational research to debate whether or not federalization is a good idea. And one of the things I became quickly aware of in looking at the data is that the disparities in education across the nation are really, at that time especially, horrendous. And without some kind of intervention to get some of those deep, deep, deep bottoms brought up somewhere into some kind of a medium, you really have to think that our nation is badly split.

However, once this federalization move got started, there seems to be no stopping of it. And I don't think this is really a correctly understood as a partisan politics matter at all because this same pattern has existed in the periods of time that the several political philosophies have been represented in the White House. I think what we're dealing with here is a bureaucratization more than anything else. And one of the things that is right in front of us now is the use of accrediting associations; the giving by the Department of Education of the authority to accredit only to agencies that are willing to take that as part of their role: to be, if you please, federal watchdogs on certain matters. And this is clearly a problem. It is quite often triggered by references to loan defaults.

Now the loan defaults are, indeed, a big, big motivator for Congress. It's just an excuse to do something you want to do anyway, or not to do something we didn't want to do and it's nice to be able to blame it on somebody else. So I always put loan defaults in quote marks because I think these "loan defaults" are quite often used out-of-place to argue for certain things that really have very little to do with that issue.

Another piece of bad news, of course, is that the regional accrediting associations themselves are allowing themselves to become a monopolistic sector and to dominate the accreditation process in such a way that the other agencies, especially special agencies and even some of the specialized agencies, may be wing-clipped unless they are willing to simply sit under the nest of a regional agency. And for AABC this is really a very, very serious threat, much less after the current action of the new CHIA, but I don't think that that one is all resolved simply because of one decision. I think we're going to see that one come back in many different forms and we're going to have to kind of keep our eyes open and the leadership in the association is going to have to be continuing in its alertness on this issue.

Specialized accreditation is pushed into a subordinate role. It doesn't follow that the special agencies such as AABC and ATS and others have to be pushed into that kind of subordination. I think, in some respects, AABC is a bit of a nuisance because AABC is a kind of a maverick that's very hard to get under control from the outside and may it ever always thus be.

Now the ultimate encroachment, of course, is one that we've recently had a brush with and that is the potential for denial of accrediting authority. And under the present structures of things, the denial of accrediting authority can happen in a twinkling of an eye. And so I'm not much of a doomsayer on this sort of matter, but I do think we have to be on guard. And it's going to be extremely important for all of the associations—all the members of the associations to make sure that your district congressman and, if possible, your senators are brought to your campuses, given some degree of involvement, some recognition. Keep them involved so that they say, "Who? Never heard of him. Are they in our state?" And that does happen sometimes in Washington simply because the institutions are in a kind of an isolated posture and not aware of how important that political connection really is. So we're going to have to all do something on this matter; not expect it to happen simply out of Fayetteville.

Let me turn now to the direction of the Bible college movement, itself. In some respects, the Bible College movement—well, it also has good news and bad news. But I think the good news is overpowering. In terms of the bad news, which we'll get out of the way first: *an avowedly singular set of purposes is variously interpreted and pursued*. I read that exactly as I printed here because I wanted you to see that that one can be seen as good news or bad news. From a theological, from a Christian's stance, from a perspective as a Christian concerned in higher education, and for a particular specie of Christian higher education that would be regarded as good news.

But the bad news here is that many of our institutions agree that that's terribly important but they refuse to accept the fact that this "variously interpreted and pursued" also comes along in that bargain. We look at the first part of that statement and we say that's just exactly what it should be. But look at the second part. I think that's what it should be, too. Now there's the color of my glass, alright? I think you've got, in the association, a diversity that is a healthy diversity. And, by the way, I was pleased to discover that in the in the survey a number of you recognized the value of diversity in the AABC. And one of my concerns that sweeps through from here on in my presentation is that we've got to do more with that diversity. Now I'm not talking about ethnic diversity here. I'm talking about diversity as to how we go about fulfilling the business of being a Bible College. More about that later. I think it's bad news that we haven't really faced up to that danger in having a statement that we all pledge allegiance to and, yet, don't respect the fact that we're seeing applications of that that are very differential. I think that's a piece of bad news.

The individual Bible colleges retain a high degree of individualization and that kind of individualism which is very, very frontier-ish and very, very defensive and very, very a fortress mentality—you can put a lot of nasty phrases over it—but it is dangerous that we try to stand alone on the prairie at this point. We need one another. We need one another deeply, and that individualism is still very clearly shot through the association. I can show you that in the final report we'll show you many different phrases of remarks that show that that individualism just comes through over and over and over again. The movement, as a whole, suffers from a kind of defensiveness—not defeatism, but defensiveness. It's a kind of proud defensiveness; but, nonetheless, defensiveness. And in the long run of things, the cause of Christ is not very well served by defensiveness.

And the last of these I identify is the enforcement-style approach to standardization and that kind of accreditation that thinks in terms of enforcing rather than encouraging and developing and enhancing, and I think we've just got to do something about that one. For one thing, it means that the accrediting process, as we know it, does not really encourage creativity. Tradition and habit become the safe alternatives. So tradition and habit, we hide behind it and then we're safe. They're kind of like our foxholes. But get out of the foxhole and start making some new territory and moving forward on the enemy, you're apt to get shot at from behind. And there are any number of our presidents who are very, very weary of being shot at from our own troops on these sorts of matters.

Now the good news and it's a lot of it. There's even one more point than is printed here and I'll tell you what it is when we get there, but the first of these is that there is a popularity of the more rigorous and value-based kind of education. That is true, I think, in U.S. and Canada in a more general way than many of us realize. I think we may have hit bottom on this presumption that you really don't have to be concerned about values and you don't even dare say anything about values. I think we're turning the corner on that one in higher education. And I think that the Bible colleges, then, will become a little less odd; a little less different and perhaps, in some respects, sought after as an example of how do you do it? What does it require? And that might be a very good thing for us in terms of the influence of Christian higher education, and particularly the Bible colleges, on the rest of the educational community. I am looking forward to the time—not from your data, please; this is my opinion purely—that within another ten years we're going to see a number of Christian higher education institutions looking specifically at the Bible colleges to say what did we lose? Where did we go wrong and how can we get back to where some of the Bible colleges have never left? I really believe that that's a real feasibility. That's almost been the opposite in the last 25 years, as most of you know. Most of the movements away from the Bible college movement almost, like, turn their back on the Bible college movement and say well, we've graduated from *that*. And I think some of them are going to turn around and say, I wonder what we lost in the process?

You see, the post-modern society—if you understand it philosophically and historically—where we are in a kind of a values position in the Western world (commonly called a post-modern society) leaves people just a little more free to explore religious alternatives without being treated as old-fashioned. In fact, it may become the new style to examine things. Now these new examiners are currently called seekers. They are not really that interested in the gospel. They are not necessarily that interested in Christian virtue *per se*; but they are, at least, seeking.

Now specific to the AABC. Bible colleges are emphasizing the importance of field-based learning and experience more than they were for a good while. One of the things that happened when we began to be too influenced by the liberal arts model is that there was a reduction of emphasis on the field experience. Or, worse yet, putting it off on another bureau, or another branch, or another dean so that you had the academic stuff, which is what really counts because that's what you got the grades on, and then there was other stuff that's kind of traditional requirement. And, by golly, some of that's beginning to move back and the experiential learning components are now being valued for the value in learning that they represent. I think that's a very healthy change.

Many of the colleges have found ways to collaborate with broader institutions without sacrificing their standards and values; something that we used to believe just couldn't be done. But especially some of our Canadian institutions have led the way here beautifully. And there are some fascinating collaborations with the provincial and, in some cases, state universities and major universities as institutions attempt to broaden their service potential by interlocking with institutions of that sort.

The extensions and expansions that are being opened by so many of our member institutions are important in terms of the development of new sectors of students for Christian ministry. And, let's face it, if we stand still, even quantitatively stand still, the population as a growing population, and a Christian population of the world as a rapidly changing and, in many places, a growing population is going to be underserved by the present structures in Bible colleges.

The sixth point that is to be added here was something that came out in our discussions in the board the other day that there is an increased awareness in higher education that is affecting us in Bible colleges: that quality is related not just to the knowledge of professors and their capacities in research and writing, but it's related extensively to the quality of their teaching and the effectiveness of their work in support and encouragement of students. And the relationships are, once again, becoming centered in terms of our consciousness and our awareness.

Now let me just append to this a kind of a nagging concern. If I put several of these trends together, one of the things that really, really worries me is the possibility that AABC may be headed toward a kind of isolation, a kind of an extended old boys' club, unless we take a much more interested and involved attitude toward our newcomers. I'm delighted to see people applying to this association and I hope that each of you, as old-timers, will recognize that the new-coming institutions need to be felt that they have a place, that they have an identity, that they have a worth. And as we encourage those institutions, we have, I think, a greater likelihood of long-term validity as an association. We cannot continue to exist by losing a disproportionate number of institutions year by year. That is surely the recipe for the end.

There's another piece of this, too, and some of you are aware of it and others may not be. The AABC institutions are really a particular breed of the Bible college. The Bible colleges, especially in the United States, and also in Canada, are much more numerous and are growing at a faster rate. The non-AABC institutions are growing faster than the AABC institutions in terms of the number of them, as institutions, and in terms of their enrollments. Now some of these we rather look down our nose and say well, they're just church-based mid-operations and they don't amount to much. Well, I ask you, how many of *your* origins were just church-based mid-operations that didn't amount to much? That's not a good thing to sneer at.

Secondly, many of these are in urban centers, and how effective is *your* college in terms of urban ministry? That's where the world is headed, and especially if you are attempting to train missionaries, for heaven's sake, the missionaries of the future are not going to be largely *bush* missionaries. They're going to be *urban* missionaries. What do your people know about urban experience after they get through at *your* Bible college? Don't be two-faced about this; either you are interested in missions or you're not. And if you're interested in missions, you have to look at where the people of the world are and are increasingly going. And the answer is, in urban centers.

Now many of the growing Bible colleges are in urban centers and well, you say, they don't count because they're a different color. Oh, yeah, sure. *There's* a winner. Many of these are forming their own accrediting associations. You say, oh yeah, but what do they know about accreditation? Well, now, let me just ask you a question: how much did this organization know about accreditation when Brother Mostert¹ was trying to pull it together? As an onlooker, not much in my opinion. It's come a long way; it's come a long way. And we need to think about these other institutions and relate more effectively and it may mean that some of us are going to have to learn a little bit about how we deal with an even wider diversity of all sorts, including a kind of academic and purpose of diversity unless we want to truly become the old boys' club that just slowly argues itself to death?

The AABC research now. We've mentioned several phases of the research and I'm going to specifically report on just the first phase because we're into the second phase but haven't finished the first phase yet. The first phase is this presidential interview and questionnaire. The data are all in that we're going to be able to process, at any rate, except that I've got an awful lot of blanks in the questionnaire so I have an agenda of about 14 phone calls that I've got to make yet to get the blanks filled in because many of the blanks just disallow the whole response. I just can't deal with it with so many holes in it. Some of you will be hearing back from that, so just be warned.

Once that stuff is done, we will have finished Phase One. Phase Two is already underway. We're doing an assessment of alternatives to AABC membership. Now this is not a not a question of building an alternative organization, but it says what do people do instead of AABC? We've lost some members. What are they like? What do they do? What becomes of them? When they take an alternative to AABC, what do they do? We're also going to try to look at some of the alternative organizations. What are they like? What do they draw, and what are their strengths and weaknesses? So in Phase Two, we will look at this alternatives matter: *Alternatives to the AABC membership*.

And then, three: our third phase will be focused on concerns and intended expansions in the five-year period 1997 to 2002. What are the plans? What is apt to change in the institutions that are now members? What expansions? What reductions? Some of the data we already have, but we're going to get that a lot more precisely. Because of time, I'm not going to be able to do much with the data. If you're as curious as I know some of you are, I thought you might like to just kind of play some eyeball games with raw data. These are raw, unprocessed data and they have all the limitations of raw data in that you just can't go on what you think you see on the one item or two. It's kind of fun to do some correlations with your eyes there. I'll be giving you much more of this in finished form on paper some day, but I've discovered that people don't read that stuff anyway. But they do sometimes play around with raw data.

¹ Ralph Enlow provides this information: Ted is referring to Dr. John Mostert, AABC's second Executive Director following S.A. Witmer (who wrote the first history of the Bible college movement, *Education With Dimension: The Bible College Story*).

Number one: this is not all the cases that we have in. I just had to print it at some point and get it ready for the meeting, but I know of ten more that are on my data than are on that. And the other thing is that all these things are subject to appropriate interpretation over against and in light of the interviews, but let me just point out two or three things. First of all, there's a very strong agreement, in fact, *the* strongest agreement is on item one: *Accreditation is very important to our college's survival*. And I found out that that was true, even with some of the Canadian institutions; that they were saying yes, accreditation is important to us. Even though accreditation is not a Canadian thing, it has given us a basis of saying that some of our provincial universities and others that take our graduates. Look we are responsible. We have submitted ourselves to the review process of an agency that accredits our kinds of institutions and some of the institutions above the border have accepted that as a kind of an index of professionalism.

The second one, however: *AABC accreditation is very important to our survival*. You should know here that there's quite a quite a deviation on this; that the standard deviation on this is much higher and about 10% of our institutions fundamentally disagree. Now if you look at the mission statement of AABC and recognize that many of our people are saying, that's not important to us, we got a problem. Because the mission statement of AABC is written so narrowly that it is possible to say, that's all AABC is supposed to do: just provide us an accreditation process. You look at it in your book of Standards. It's unfortunately narrow. AABC, and we talk about this in Recommendations, needs a broader frame of reference in several ways and that's certainly one of them.

I'd like to call your attention to number four: *The matter of Accreditation in AABC as a symbol of our credibility*. In my opinion, the responses there are not nearly as high as they ought to be. I was really surprised on this one. Yes, it's positive; but it also has an awful lot of people who are saying, sort of. And I think we ought to do something about this. I think this place ought to be a lighthouse. AABC ought to be right up there shining brightly and clearly so that people would say, indeed, that accreditation is a symbol of our credibility. You might want to think about that.

Number eight: *Our students need no formal education beyond what they receive in college*. I got two very sarcastic remarks on the feedback—why do you put an absurd question like this? Well, the fact is that this is a statement. This is a statement from some of our people who say we don't need any more formal education than we provide. I can understand that. I know something of the mandate of those institutions. But some of the rest of us with other mandates look at that and say what sort of an institution is it that says we're providing everything that anybody's ever going to need? We've got that kind of diversity here. Now what are you going to do? Frown at it, scold at it, or accept it? I think you have to decide and I certainly hope we don't end up frowning at it, scolding it, and trying little by little to put it out of business by putting tighter standards here and there and yonder. We've wasted too much energy, and we are too much in the posture of exhausting ourselves by trying to use *this* organization as a forum for our own personal agendas. I will notice elsewhere in the data that the characteristic that I find in so much of our reasoning and thinking is that a Bible college is *the* important kind of education, and the way you know what a Bible college is, is to look at ours.

This relates to something in the third paragraph of my three-page document. Well over one-third of the presidents assert that the effectiveness of AABC for the future will require a greater degree of responsiveness to the circumstances in which the colleges find themselves. Today's Bible colleges are engaged in programs and procedures that are well beyond the anticipation of founders of the movement. Indeed, the fiscal well being of many of the member institutions is now assumed

to depend extensively on such expansions and extensions. And, folks, you can't put the genie back in the bottle. It's out there. Bible colleges are serving a much broader constituency. Not all of them, but some of them. Then, those that aren't say oh, you're threatening us. You're saying unless we do that, there's something wrong with us. So we'll attack them because there must be something wrong with them because they have left their first love. And on and on it goes. Wherever you stand, everybody else is wrong. Now I'm exaggerating that and there aren't many of us who say it that way, but I'm afraid there are many of us who *think* that way. And this, I think, is a very important weakness in the organization. The vigor and intensity of the defense of common heritage has resulted in an organization (AABC) that is unified in terms of a set of narrow particulars. So far, so good. Nothing wrong with the narrow particulars that holds us together.

But next paragraph. Member institutions are widely varied in the ways they perceive and fulfill the common mission. First full paragraph of the second page. Each institution's vision of the whole of the Bible college movement is largely a reflection of itself. To some extent, each institution sees the AABC as the means of helping other Bible colleges to become more like itself. I don't know of any accrediting association that does that except this one. That's a problem. The means of accomplishing this has been in the writing and re-writing of definitions of what a Bible college is or ought to be and defending or bending. I don't—by the way, if I ever found the Latin for those, I'd put that on our crest: defending or bending. Defending or bending this or that among the AABC standards over such matters as the AABC may be on the verge of arguing itself to death.

Now I don't know whether you're aware of the background of the COPA-CORPA², but that's exactly what destroyed the COPA-CORPA approach to accrediting. It was that turf defending and that presumption that each accrediting association had it right, and all the others were inherently wrong. And that's one reason we are now faced with this new entity called CHEA. And so long as the kind of wise person as Larry Braskamp is anywhere near the top of this thing, we will probably have a period of peace and harmony. But Larry Braskamp talks—and he even talked to our board the other day—in terms of unity that encourages diversity, unity that encourages diversity; not unity that forces conformity, but unity that encourages diversity. And that's what they're going to be looking for as they look at this organization. That should not be our value systems so that we have to do what is necessary to survive. But I think we ought to know that if we don't see things that way, we will be perceived as out-of-step; and we ought to have a good defense for why we're out of step, which I would have a hard time writing.

Much of the particulars in here I suspect you can you can read for yourselves and I, because of time, I'm not going to get into every jot and tittle. I got to get on with a few particulars. One of the paragraphs here is the one, at about the 60% mark, offsetting these trends is a growing awareness of the value of two parachutes. One of the reasons that things were changing in AABC is that there is a kind of an awareness that investment to accrediting is not necessarily a bad use of money; that there are good reasons to have two parachutes. Nobody does skydiving with one parachute, and most educational institutions today are aware that they are skydiving. And if that parachute doesn't work, it's a much shorter trip down but not as satisfactory. If we, for example, were to lose the accrediting capacity in AABC, which now, thank God, is not a likely scenario in the

² Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA)-Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA). The Council for Higher Education Accretation (CHEA).

next few years. Thankful for that. But that would mean that if you don't have Regional, you're going to be in trouble.

Similarly, if you have Regional and the Regional is persistently moving in the direction of becoming an agency of regulation and the imposition of social agendas, there are going to be some requirements about what you accept and what you don't accept; and on what grounds you reject—faculty, staff, and students—that most of our institutions will not be able to accept. At that time, it'll be a wonderful thing to have that other parachute—pull that one out and I come floating down with the AABC. So I think that the dual parachute model is going to become very, very much more common. These dually accredited institutions are no longer just our biggies. There are many of our small institutions that are dually accredited. Things have really changed along this regard. Many of the smaller institutions would not have had a chance with Regionals ten years ago. Today they are being wooed actively. Now any time you see that kind of transformation in a social agenda, you have to ask, I wonder what the agenda is? I don't want to get into that; that's not in the research.

Some things that are in the research and are clear is that we need about six specific recommendations which have now been presented to the board and they are working on them. I've got these in easy to “hard” order. One of the easiest is to say, “We need to be really sure that our programs—that our conventions, especially—are representative of insiders and outsiders.” We need to listen to the outside. We need to react and interact with the insiders. And we need to be very, very careful that the use of the national program—the national convention—is one that increases the vitality and the strength of our institutions and of this association.

Second is we may need to also think in terms of periodically—on some kind of a basis, at least—having a regional meeting instead of a national meeting because there are going to be increasingly important regional issues and especially in the U.S. for those institutions that are dually accredited to have an experience and opportunity; a circumstance and environment in which they can invite in people from the Regionals to sit with them and talk about these issues. Because the more we can learn to talk with people from these other agencies and from these other backgrounds, the better off we're going to be. Having Larry Braskamp here is an important point. It's strategic. It's valuable. It gives an identity, and it lets him know that we are real people doing real work and doing it very well. And I think that's one of the things that we need to do institutionally and as an organization.

Third is the important matter of developing a positive image of the Bible college education itself. And again, this would require really a kind of a re-conceptualization of the purpose of AABC, and it will involve some costs. But we have to either go it alone on this or get some kind of overarching help in reference to building more clearly on a national level in the U.S. and Canada of the validity of the Bible college educational experience.

The fourth of these has to do with the way we do business. This was really kind of a nasty one because it says that some of the things we found in the survey is that some of the experiences of site visit groups, even of the commission meetings here at our meetings—not here specifically, but in general—when we bring the commission together and have institutions before them, some of the experiences have not been perceived as hospitable, warm, and encouraging. They've been perceived much more as a kind of a judge-and-jury situation with sometimes a rather poor public defender

trying to help the institution. We've really got to be sure in everything we do; that we behave in a totally Christian manner, and that we reflect Christian values in the way we go at them.

The fifth, on the next sheet at the top, for dually accredited institutions and non-duplicative basis for self-study and reporting to the association should be established. We've moved on this one. We're down the road apiece, but we need to regularize it. We need some new statements of policy that will make very clear what the ways we reduce load and requirement, not standards, but load and task requirement in this dual-accreditation process. We have got to take our part in making this easy for institutions; not making it hard for them. And, for one thing, we should at least get these things on synchronous schedules so that people at the institutions don't have to go through this process of self-study and external review twice in a decade.

The sixth one is probably the most controversial and has the most need for further work and careful study, but I feel very strongly that one of the key problems—you've heard me say it indirectly—one of the key problems in the organization that is clearly going to make a whale of a difference in how we handle the future is how we get ourselves organized as a set of people with diversities that are acknowledged to be legitimate diversities. As I worked with the presidents on the interviews and as I listened very closely; and then as I look over the data from the questionnaire, I see very clearly two patterns of institutions. This is an organization that has unity in the level of purpose and we do real well in terms about purpose of stuff, but what we don't seem to agree to is the need for fulfilling these purposes with some degree of individualization and some degree of the differentiation according to our market, our heritage, our size, our urban, our rural or suburban location, and all the rest of that. Our procedures have got to be different.

Now I'm suggesting that one of the things we might want to do is take a hard look at ourselves and say, look, am I part of this bunch or that bunch? Both bunches are legitimate. I suggest here that we think of them in the simplest, non-pejorative terms as Type One and Type Two Bible colleges. Type One: having classical programs. Nothing wrong with that. Absolutely nothing wrong with that. Type Two: having more expanded programs. Nothing wrong with that. Absolutely nothing wrong with that. Many of the expanded institutions would be quick to tell you that they still have the classical programs and have the classical requirements.

I visited, just two weeks ago in the process of Phase Two research, I visited one of our former members where every requirement with regard to curriculum is still in place. The institution is growing phenomenally. Now it's calling itself a university and it clearly is developing a stature as a university, but its programs from top to bottom still have the 30-credit Bible requirement and the purpose of statements of that institution still have to do with preparing people for Christian ministry. But at that point when they left this organization, they left this organization because they did not feel comfortable that this organization really wanted them. We have others in here that are not sure that this institution, this organization, this enterprise, this accrediting association really wants them.

I'm suggesting that, if we can at least acknowledge that there are needs and circumstances that are differential in these two clusters, we will move ourselves a long way toward unity; it's a conundrum. You gain unity by acknowledging diversity. Yes. You create dissension by *failing* to acknowledge diversity. Can you hear that? If you fail to acknowledge diversity, if you fail to create legitimization for people who are different, you're going to spend the rest of your life trying to prove

that you are the center of the universe. And that is sometimes called ethnocentricity, and I think that this is something we've got to very, very carefully consider.

Now the strategy for doing that, all kinds of possibilities, but one of the things I strongly believe is that institutions ought to be able to decide for themselves which cluster they fit into, or if they need to sit it out and wait-and-see time; give them a space to sit it out and wait and see. But, ultimately, this organization is big enough and especially if it's going to grow—it's big enough to absorb two different centers of thinking. And in these two centers, we could even ultimately see the possibility of some variations in terms of procedures and even specifics in terms of footnotes on standards. Believe me, I did not find groundswell of enthusiasm among either of those sectors for specific changes in curricular standards. But what I found was a kind of difference in terms of how ministry preparation is defined. For some of us, ministry preparation is defined very narrowly in terms of creating vocational pastors for a given single denomination.

Now if I ask for a show of hands on how many of you define your purposes that way, I would get several hands; and the rest of you would probably say, well, that's, you know, that's too bad. I don't think it's too bad at all. I think that's pretty good because those people find fellowship and encouragement and strength from those of you who say, good night, we're serving all kinds of ministries, all kinds of missions broader than that, outside of that, and we're glad we are. So we're right! There's the rub; there's the rub. When we take it that final step and say, that should be the norm. There's the rub.

Accreditation in AABC is important to some institutions, more important to others. For most, membership is a significant evidence of affiliation and identity along with institutions of similar origins and purposes. And, ultimately, we stand under a definition that is a marvelously clear definition without using any numbers at all. I refer you to the page 16 of the manual where a definition under Article A point 2 point (1) says this:

A Bible College is an institution of higher education in which the Bible is central. The development of Christian life and ministry is essential. A Bible college education requires of all students a substantial core of biblical studies, general studies, and Christian service experiences; and integrates a biblical worldview with life and learning. It offers curricula that fulfill its overriding purpose to equip all students for ministry in and for the church in the world.

To that, we should all be able to say, Amen.

What we have to also recognize is that there's more than one way to do that. The AABC is a lively entity, grounded in a worthy heritage. Its mission should be to facilitate and encourage the development of its member institutions to the highest quality of fulfillment of the various purposes and gifts which God has given them. Opinion and evidence strongly support the conclusion that it is still needed, perhaps more than ever. There is much more of its mission to fulfill. Claiming its future depends largely on wise decisions in the next several years.

Thank you very much.