



JOHN WITHERSPOON
COLLEGE
Fides Quaerens Intellectum

8/29/2018

Dear Board of John Witherspoon College,

Greetings on this gorgeous fall week in the Black Hills,

As many of you know, I have had the tremendous honor and privilege of serving John Witherspoon College for the past six years in a variety of roles—Instructor of Christian Studies (founding faculty), Director of College Relations, Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, Associate Professor of Christian Studies (and Program Director), Director of Institutional Effectiveness (chief accreditation officer), Part-time Instructor of Economics, and Academic Dean (Chief Academic Officer). I have enjoyed teaching students and working together with wonderful faculty and staff getting our school off the ground, getting it accredited, and have received continual positive feedback from all parties involved each year. It seems my choice in 2010 to follow that strange intuition, “voice,” or whatever it was, to leave the farm and “go west” in search of teaching at a college that didn’t even exist yet (and I hadn’t heard of) was one of the greatest acts of faith in my life, and it has truly reaped lasting rewards and enjoyable friendships.

Sadly, I write to inform you of my indefinite (and likely permanent) leave of absence. For reasons that I hope are obvious, you deserve more than a cursory explanation, especially as I won’t be attending Convocation tomorrow evening.

Two days ago (8/27/2018), in a conversation held by and with President Wells in his pastoral office at Christ Church, I was abruptly fired. That is, it was thoroughly expressed that my involvement at the college was no longer desired and my expected annual contract (for all duties) was withheld. Instead, a four-month contract was offered that “will not be renewed.”¹

On the one hand, this was extremely surprising. A couple months ago I was appointed by the President to be Dean with high praise, approved by the Board to fulfill that role at the July 26 board meeting, scheduled to give the Convocation speech tomorrow at my formal installation,

¹ I verbally accepted this arrangement at the end of our conversation since I did not know what else to do, but have since reckoned it unwise for all parties involved, against my conscience, and simply impossible given how firmly my absence was desired and given what I recently learned about the full administrative visions for the school.

and slated to teach 2-3 classes this fall and 4-5 in the Spring.² More surprising, is that this comes over a week after the start of the fall semester (and I am deeply concerned about my students and the promises we've made to them as an institution). Even *more* surprising, is that all of this occurred without (to my knowledge) prior consent of the Board—and certainly not with any prior discussion between the Board and myself of any kind. One can't help but ask: What emergency status could possibly be attributed to such disruptive timing?

As you know, at the regular summer (July 26) board meeting a month ago, my annual report as the Director of Institutional Effectiveness was on the written agenda, but it was quietly skipped over by the functional chair (President Wells).³ Thankfully, however, accreditation requires that the Board *at least receive* this (extremely essential) information, so it eventually came to light. The report was distributed at the meeting for your own perusal, and after perusing it in hours and days that followed, some of you became *very* concerned. In fact, after interviewing the President for "a couple hours,"⁴ the newly elected President (REDACTED) even resigned from President-elect *and* the Board just hours later (on July 28).⁵

Then, the vice-chair (REDACTED) called an emergency board meeting for August 13. There, at Dr. Wells' church, the new acting chair (REDACTED) opened up with some concerns. He also noted Dr. (REDACTED) fresh resignation from the presidential search committee and his concern about the current presidential administration. I was then asked to go through the annual report that was ignored at the last board meeting, which I did briefly. I also "dropped the bomb" that I could not in good conscience make the argument for our accreditor that the new 21-acre campus was justified (logically or financially), so someone else would have to do that paperwork. It became clear that the purchase was meant to create the *appearance* of growth, when it was evident that the college wasn't actually growing (see "visual aids" below). Then I answered some of your questions.

² For the record, despite some quibbles here and there, Dr. Wells and I have gotten along quite well for the last six years (he did promote me at least three times!). So it is also surprising in that larger historical context.

Full disclosure: I think Dr. Wells is a very talented and experienced individual who was just the kind of person needed to get the College going—motivated, connected, charismatic, gifted, and unusually optimistic. But as he has said (more than once I think), "God called me to start a college, not *build* a college." After the third year (when we had only 1 full time student and the Presidential search began), I began to ask myself (and sometimes to others) whether the college was being led in the right direction. I realize this kind of questioning is for the board and not for me to have. But, I really couldn't help wondering since I was so invested in the school and wanted it to be as successful as we all wanted. Around year 3, things began to fall apart.

³ I say "functional chair" because, out of all the board meetings I have attended since the founding of the school (with the exception of the emergency meeting on August 13), they are habitually opened up and led by the President and not by the Board chair. As others in higher education would attest, this is unusual and generally out of order. I have witnessed substantial confusion coming from a number of staff and board members over these years (especially as Director of Institutional Effectiveness), and it is unfortunate that it actually needs to be stated: The CEO of a registered non-profit is (that is, *should function as*) an employee of the college, not functioning as a voting board member, the chair, and certainly not functioning as a 'prophet, priest, or king' of the board.

⁴ (REDACTED) Decision," email sent to myself, (REDACTED) President Wells, and JWC Board (July 28 2018, 2:36pm).

⁵ This was presumably because of valuable things he learned, though he can obviously speak for himself.

From what I gathered, all of you were appreciative. At least that was my impression after being showered with comments such as, “I’ve never learned more about JWC in all my time as a board member than after this single meeting,” “I have asked person after person about how many students we have and have never gotten an answer, until now,”⁶ “thank you for your honesty,” etc. All of this was encouraging because of how stressful I knew the meeting might be (perhaps I would be dismissed as a know-nothing kill-joy). But, to be honest, this specific kind of response was also disconcerting; I mostly provided basic information about the college, and the same suggestions I give almost every year. I realize most of you are new board members that haven’t been around for very long, but the degree of surprise was still significant.

Even though the report is (supposed to be) available to all internal constituents,⁷ for the sake of review, “the record,” and whoever else reads this, I want to briefly summarize what it was that I covered.

On the first part of the report (enrollment and academics), I reviewed the data that by the end of the third year of the college (2015), we were supposed to have 100 students, but had less than 25. For the latest numbers (Spring 2018), we recorded 9 full-time and 10.4 full-time equivalent. As I noted, this was a staggering 69-89% misprojection from *all* of our long-term strategic plans—strategic plans that some board members expressed they weren’t even aware existed.⁸ I also gave the reasons for this unsustainably low enrollment according to gathered data and surveys.⁹

The second part of the report revealed the unfortunate financial state of the college. JWC was essentially bankrupt last year until an elderly couple passed away with a \$500,000 bequest toward the college—which we immediately began spending.¹⁰ The college as it currently stood, was/is positioned to survive until February 2019, with or without the new campus. And the capital campaign for the new 21 acres and home remodel, where \$900,000-\$1.2m was supposed to have been raised over the summer so everyone would be in the new campus by this fall semester, only

⁶ These are quotes according to the best of my memory.

⁷ According to TRACS standard 17.11, much of the report must be also be publicly available (“The institution’s assessment of student achievement includes retention rates, course completion rates, graduation rates, job placement rates, and state or other licensing examinations. Student achievement information is made available to the public.”) Currently the Annual Appraisal Report link on the jwc.edu website is dead. I considered uploading the whole thing myself (as that is—was—my responsibility), but thought it unwise in the current climate. I do not know who is taking over accreditation duties.

⁸ At most other institutions, basic college documents (catalog, policy manual, strategic plans, etc.) are covered at the new-board-member orientation. I’m not really part of that process so I can’t speak to how this mishap happened.

⁹ The general reasons for low enrollment are, in my assessment, two-fold: (a) having trouble competing as an institution (not having the programs students want and not offering any online courses or programs), and (b) being too narrow in focus (“classics-based” when the vast majority of the market has not responded favorably to this emphasis, and too narrow ideologically). I also noted that, in starting the college, we were banking on Rapid City Christian School being a “feeder” for us (10-20 new students per year). But after six years, JWC has received only *one* student from RCCS for the entire life of the College.

¹⁰ Despite knowing that half of it would be gone in months, faculty were told at 2017 summer faculty meetings that this remarkable gift would stabilize the college for many “years to come,” and re-assured that we were in a long-term financially stable position.

brought in about \$86,000.¹¹ The future was now uncertain. I expressed my concern that, since we already sold our paid-for campus on Range Road and essentially became “homeless,”¹² we would be forced to burn through our equity until the next cardiac arrest,¹³ scheduled for February-summer 2019. This was complicated by the fact that designated giving to the capital campaign cannot legally be used for operating expenses. I also asserted that, *contrary* to the past pattern and the new Benevon fundraising strategy, a college’s income statement where 10-12% of income is from tuition and the rest donations is unsustainable and should be changed as fast as possible (namely by making a college with programs that are in higher demand, to get more students).¹⁴

Then, moving on to other parts of the report, there were some observations about inputs from our stakeholders—including their opinions as to online education and new academic programs that aren’t in the humanities.¹⁵ This is one of the most important parts of the overall report because it actually records what our constituency wants. We don’t have to *imagine* or *guess* or *decree by fiat* what “the JWC community” and donors are thinking, desiring, and interested in. We can know. Our responsibility, then, is to *listen*.¹⁶ There is obviously no point in collecting data if it goes methodically ignored—which it generally has ever since we began collecting it.

After my remarks, the President was then given a chance to provide a response, which I won’t attempt to interpret—both out of fairness (I don’t want to misrepresent him) and out of bewilderment (I really don’t know what to make of it). The Board, then, tried to figure out (on their own) what on earth to do, and later resolved at a meeting the following week to not buy the campus unless 100% of the money was raised. It was too late to back out of selling the old campus. Bigger, systematic problems regarding the college would have to be addressed later.

¹¹ At the previous board meeting, the President very briefly apologized for this and said that he would restart the campaign this fall, and the meeting moved on. (I do not know if this was said in his knowledge of moving to Dallas in the same period.)

¹² I.e., depending on free rent at Dr. Wells’ church (using Sunday-school rooms for classrooms). To my knowledge, this (possibly permanent) stay has not been approved by the accreditor, and I do not suspect that (especially with Dr. Wells’ resignation at Christ Church) a long-term rent-free stay will be perpetually approved.

¹³ The constraints were tight also because expenses jumped to around or over \$35,000/month, as three part-time employees were promoted to full-time. Whether this increase was necessary or not, or financially prudent or not, is (in my opinion and in some of the board members’ opinions), debatable.

¹⁴ I can’t recall if I said it at the meeting, but I’ll say it now: firing our recruiter (REDACTED), who had excellent skills and donor relations, as a scapegoat for low enrollment, was terribly painful for me (and others). Whether we have one or ten full-time experienced recruiters will likely not change the outcome of enrollment because (as I expressed at the August 13 meeting) the systematic problems have never been attributable to recruitment, but are attributable to the reasons given in footnote 9 above.

¹⁵ Just a note of context: I have always been open, and have at times promoted, the possibility of online courses and degrees for JWC. The President has publicly and repeatedly expressed—even at fundraising events—that “JWC will *never* have online degrees—as long as I am President.” As the college continued to struggle, this message was doubled-down on the third-commencement (May 12, 2017) in the Presidential Address entitled “No Pajamas” (a good speech I might add, though didn’t agree with the application). Faculty opinion about online education, to my knowledge, is split. Founding board member Lanny Evans is, as he expressed at the August 13 board meeting, dead set against it. So, anyway, this was one of those regular discussions at various faculty meetings that never really settled. (As many of you know, even hard-core “classics” institutions like New Saint Andrews and Patrick Henry College are now offering online courses almost entirely out of survival.)

¹⁶ It is my strong opinion that we have not been listening to our constituency nearly enough.

That afternoon (if I remember right), the President called me into his office for...“cross-examination” is perhaps the best term.¹⁷ It was evident that the President was not at all pleased by my remarks at the board meeting, even as vital, appropriate, and respectful as they were. This wasn’t surprising. It was the first time in the history of John Witherspoon College where the President’s judgment, management abilities, and integrity was openly and substantially challenged (at least in a board meeting). It was also the first time that it was revealed that the President’s decisions put the future of the college into jeopardy. And it was also the first time (in my view) that the Board began making big decisions independent of the President. So I understand the presidential discomfort. All of this organizational transformation and my alternative story-telling was generally viewed not as necessary and good, but as *problematic*. But, despite the build up to the August 13 board meeting (many anxiety attacks and years worth of courage)—I have no regrets and trust that it was the right thing to do. And again, you have expressly stated that you appreciated my honesty, and I believe that.

One note of repetition between this meeting with the President and the next was the fact that I disclosed to the board (at the August 13 meeting) that I’ve been applying elsewhere. This was said to be a “wet blanket” on the college, and suggested that maybe I wasn’t really committed to JWC, and *this* suggested that maybe it was time for me to leave. If this is your view as well (I won’t assume), my explanation is not complicated: *it is not unreasonable, unethical, or worrisome to look for a lifeboat on the Titanic*. Given its shaky state,¹⁸ I obviously had doubts about the future of the college. Some of these concerns manifested themselves in hesitance toward many new proposals (fundraising campaigns, applying for regional accreditation, and yes, even my own recommendation of new students to attend). My support and presence of the college has naturally been contingent on the school changing to a better model—which is obviously contingent on the (ever-elusive) next President. So, yes I dampened the unrealistic optimism of the college by this disclosure. This was partly my intention: to provide an overdue “reality check.”

And then there was some questioning about my theological beliefs regarding the truthfulness of the scripture, and the meaning(s) of “inerrancy.” I tried to explain that “without error” and “Bible” in our statement of faith can mean many things (especially since the original authors of it are unknown, or at least inaccessible). But, it was clear that only the President’s interpretation counted, with or without consultation of the Board.¹⁹ And despite affirming the Bible’s reliability

¹⁷ I was told “inquisition” was how it might come across, but that it wasn’t.

¹⁸ The chances of the school surviving the next 24 months is realistically less than 20%, and according to my personal conversations with other college presidents and board members in higher ed over the last year or two, this estimate is “about right” and even “optimistic.” As I mentioned at the August 13 meeting, a quick skimming of (say) the Chronicle of Higher Ed blog (or even the *Rapid City Journal*, see the July 24 article “State university centers struggle for enrollments”) will easily show the catastrophic changes that are occurring right now in higher education—and the unfortunate consequences of when they are ignored.

¹⁹ It is true that I have become critical of staunch, no-compromise “inerrancy” over the last couple years because of how it runs against critical thinking and needlessly divides churches. (See references in footnote 23). So the President’s general concern is not surprising—what is surprising is that this was fully confronted at this disruptive moment.

and trustworthiness (as if that was *ever* a question)²⁰ in my own words, these weren't the 'right' words. The discussion remained unresolved.²¹

We've come full circle because then came the final meeting two days ago (August 27), where some of these things were rehashed. But I was initially confronted with what appeared to be random issues oriented at painting me in a strangely negative light.²² The heresy-hunt also expanded. The President was personally offended by my publications on gender and women in ministry since I criticize views that he and other people at the college happen to hold. (Why that was a surprise, I don't know since this is a given in higher ed, and our College has a statement on academic freedom specifically designed to protect faculty from these kinds of moves). He also shared his conversion story to young-earth creationism ("because of the science") and how all of these things are *essential* to the meaning of Christian liberal arts and the identity of JWC. In short, it was asserted that I just didn't fit the intellectual orientation of the college.

And in *some* sense, that was right (I'm not a staunch young-earth creationist, biblicist inerrantist—certainly not of the Southern-Baptist flavor, or a "complementarian" who believes that women can't be pastors, seminary presidents, presidents, etc. simply because of their sex). But, in the realm of global and historic Christian faith, one might ask why *these* issues are an official test for orthodoxy when they aren't for the other 95% of Christians around the globe.²³ Is it really necessary to alienate ourselves from so many other brothers and sisters in Christ? Well, regardless, I guess I learned the extremely narrow meaning of "non-nondenominational." I tried to explain that if JWC is truly going to be sustainable—if *Christian higher education in the Black Hills*

²⁰ I regularly taught apologetics at JWC.

²¹ Perhaps this is because applying a term like "inerrancy" to an anthology of literature of widely diverse genres, is generally a category error—just like it would be to declare a nearby plant or decorative stone "moral" or "sad." But that's just my opinion (and of many other Christian scholars). At any rate, the literature on this debate is vast, and there is a thorough bibliography of it in my syllabus for "Intro to the Bible" (now "Origins of the Bible") that is easily accessible.

²² One was the lack of support from Dr. (REDACTED) to my promotion as Dean (he did not give a "charge"). The remarks by the President were (verbatim) "(REDACTED) and I were sitting down to work on the program for convocation and she informed me that whereas I had asked Dr. (REDACTED) to bring a charge to the Dean on behalf the faculty, he was not willing to do that." Dr. (REDACTED) and I are friends but openly disagree about how the college should change. Anyway, what is troubling is that (a) the President did not ask Dr. (REDACTED) about why the charge wasn't given, (b) the other faculty were not consulted (to my knowledge); and most of all (c) the President sought a charge for my promotion weeks *after* I was both appointed by the President and approved by the Board.

²³ The answer, I think, is the age-old "fundamentalist-modernist" controversy. I defiled the holy triad of 20th century American evangelical fundamentalism (biblicist inerrantism, young-earth creationism, male authority in all spheres of life). If these big-word labels are unclear or not meaningful to you, the following resources may be helpful: George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press); *idem.*, *Religion and American Culture: A Brief History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Sathianathan Clarke, *Competing Fundamentalisms: Violent Extremism in Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2017); Christian Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2012); James Barr, *Escaping Fundamentalism* (SCM, 1984); Thom Stark, *The Human Faces of God: What Scripture Reveals When It Gets God Wrong (And Why Inerrancy Tries to Hide It)* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2011); Carlos Bovell, *Rehabilitating Inerrancy in a Culture of Fear* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2012); *idem.*, *Inerrancy and the Spiritual Formation of Younger Evangelicals* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2007); *idem.*, *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Authority of Scripture: Historical, Biblical, and Theoretical Perspectives* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2011); Frances FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017); Ronald Numbers, *The Creationists* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Julie Ingersoll, *Evangelical Christian Women* (New York: NYU Press, 2003).

is going to survive—it cannot and should not rigidly pigeon-hole itself to the extremely specific propositions of an incredulous sect or dying denomination or anything else regardless of what those beliefs happen to be. The problem isn't perceived heresy as much as the *approach*. A tiny tent means tiny enrollment.²⁴ Our faculty generally did not join to teach 50% of their courses as individual directed-study, or teach to 3-6 students per class for the others.

In contrast, during my time at JWC, I have consistently respected my colleagues and students views on these issues and others, even while disagreeing with them. This is precisely one of the reasons why students so greatly enjoy my teaching; *they don't have to be afraid*. They have the necessary room to explore, and to do it on their own as independent critical-thinkers—all within the Christian faith. I thought that's what a liberal arts education was all about. (If there is any doubts about this, I encourage personal interviews and talks with anyone—but especially alumni since they are most qualified.)

I'm not sure why I'm saying all of this. Without the President's foreknowledge, I recorded the meeting and transcribed it. I don't really do this type of thing, but as you know, the rule in higher ed is that the board is not allowed to talk to any employees (and possibly former employees) about the college (outside a meeting or without board permission) without running it through the "channel" of the President. I don't trust that arrangement. So you can listen/read it for yourself (available upon request).

Anyway, the whole meeting came as an unfortunate lesson. The distinction between education and indoctrination at the college has, in my opinion, been compromised. The academic freedom statement of our school (which I co-drafted) means little. "Faculty diversity" is negligible. In short, what I thought the college stood for is now officially demonstrated not to be the case. Under all of these circumstances, there is simply no way I could continue supporting the college, pointing students to the college, support highly involved fundraising efforts,²⁵ etc. In fact, given the desperate situation, my hope is now (as I expressed to President Wells) that the College disbands as fast as possible so that major debts won't accrue, and all of the bleeding and pain can finally come to an end.

And I am sorry to report that the bleeding is about to get worse.

What follows are a few "house-keeping" items you should know about as the board.

²⁴ To read this position as some kind of concession of faith, or compromise on Christian liberal arts education, I think is a distortion of what our institutional objectives really say and what Christianity in the first century was really about. For whatever our disagreements would be, my approach would be "that's fine, let's talk," (though it appears too late for this).

²⁵ This is one reason why I declined to participate in hosting "Witherspoon 101" sessions when asked by our Dean of Students (REDACTED). I could not in good conscience seek out other people's money for a project that I knew was headed towards a cliff. I don't mean disrespect—and certainly didn't want to make anyone's job more difficult. But I have a conscience and feel a very deep responsibility to the donors upon which my paycheck depended—especially after seeing the life-time savings of a wonderful elderly couple (the Steinwandt bequest) so quickly dissolve.

First, as an unfortunate “welcome” to the board chair, I sent (REDACTED) a list of policy violations committed by the President, which he may or may not have shared with you. Some are more severe than others. You can assess those violations however and whenever you wish.²⁶

Second, our credits are *not* actually transferring to other colleges (including in-state ones like Black Hills State, SDSU, USD etc.) because we are not “regionally accredited” (but instead “nationally accredited”). Supposedly, articulation agreements are “in the works” but I personally have no trust that they will work out or help the college—especially since they actually encourage students to *leave* JWC to finish their BA elsewhere. This is a huge credibility problem.

Third, as our recruiters/admissions staff know all too well, the above fact is a severe blow to the integrity of our brand-new agreement with Rapid City Christian School. Our relationship to the RCCS has been strange since the beginning. Our own faculty have been used to issue credits at Colorado Christian University (our biggest “local” competition, in my opinion) for unknown reasons that still puzzle me. (Why would we employ our own faculty to *assist* students in going to a non-JWC school?).²⁷ Anyway, RCCS is generally under the impression that dual enrollment students will be able to transfer their credits to School of Mines, BHS, etc.

Fourth, there is no plausible way to get regionally accredited (in my opinion) with such low enrollment numbers and the ongoing leadership crisis.

Fifth, because of the aforementioned transfer problem, our current accreditor is a liability instead of an asset. It’s also a liability because TRACS is probably the single most notorious accrediting agency recognized by the US Department of Education.²⁸ It is, in my view, too intellectually narrow to allow JWC to make the changes necessary to grow. Nobody has been told why TRACS was chosen over regional (HLC) to begin with, but I suspect it was to take the path of least resistance (which it was). Despite a friendly relationship so far (and great staff), TRACS has come with a stiff price tag—lack of recognition by local schools and public embarrassment.

Sixth, you may have heard the recent news about The Master’s College—highly upheld by the President, fan’s of John MacArthur, and other parties²⁹—being put on accreditation probation.³⁰ This was due to violating standards—namely operational integrity, a “climate of intimidation,” and conflicts of interest on the board/Presidency. I realize WASC is not the same as HLC, but I am still highly concerned that if the college follows through with its official and

²⁶ And in case there is any question—I have not been a blameless employee. I have sometimes been late for class, I have not (as Alesha has confronted me about) been appropriately attentive to student advising of part-time students in the last year, and I have been gone more than I probably should speaking at conferences.

²⁷ Yet, if I remember right, the President used these dual-enrollment students to count for *our* enrollment numbers instead of CCU. This is extremely bothersome.

²⁸ Please read the public Wikipedia page of TRACS:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transnational_Association_of_Christian_Colleges_and_Schools

²⁹ In fact, one of JWC’s graduates transferred into Masters with her A.A.

³⁰ Samuel Smith, “John MacArthur’s Master’s University Put on Probation by Accrediting Agency.” *The Christian Post* (August 22, 2018).

board-approved strategic plan of becoming regionally accredited, JWC would potentially get flagged for the same or similar problems.

Seventh, the GI Bill program for veterans or students of veterans (paying tuition bills) has not gone through with the college and almost certainly won't.³¹ The College has lost one full-time student over it this term who expressed frustration by our lack of action. The college will likely lose other potential students because this as the Black Hills is such a heavy military community.

This is just recent news. This letter is already 9 pages and I doubt you want to hear about other things you should know—like the recent surprise insertion of innumerable changes within college publications,³² or predictably failed teaching sites in Huron, Pierre, and Spearfish, or the public dishonesty about enrollment (see “visual aids” below), or the unilateral appointment of faculty members (without any formal hiring interview or procedures or faculty discussion)³³—including a science faculty member who is now serving a life sentence in prison for having sex with both of his adolescent sons.³⁴ And so on.

Nor is there space to mention serious theological concerns of the current presidential administration—which recklessly uses “God” and “faith” to legitimize virtually any proposal, often leading stakeholders to question their own spirituality just for questioning the administration. (For the record: I think it is possible to genuinely, non-combatively, and openly raise serious questions about the direction of a Christian college without compromising one's personal faith or spiritual state.)

These facts and opinions are heavy, but I intend no harm or hurt upon anyone. If there was receptiveness about a new vision, and financial stability to help it, then I would by all means consider staying on board. I moved to the Black Hills to see Christian higher education become a reality, not to see it fail! It deeply saddens me that JWC can no longer be identified with that hopeful vision so that now I do wish it would end. My biggest regret is not speaking up sooner,

³¹ Federal regulation changed after 9/11 so that it makes it much more difficult to work out for private institutions. It's complicated and I don't know who is responsible for figuring that out right now.

³² That is, (before handing over the reins to the New President and leaving) the President unilaterally made a final gloss on college publications — without my knowledge (I oversee publications), prior discussion with the faculty, or prior discussion with the Board, *and* specifically asked the registrar to remove highlighting (which we've always used to indicate changes) for a special copy given at the July board meeting. (In the words between emails of the registrar and myself: “Per Dr. Wells' request I prepared a “cleaned-up” draft of the 18-19 Catalogue, specifically for the Board of Trustees to review.” [July 17, 1:13pm] My reply: “I have no idea what this means; what exactly is “cleaned” up and why? What am I supposed to approve?” [4:15pm] (REDACTED) reply: “Nothing to approve. I just wanted you to be aware that I removed all the highlights as seen in the original document and created a document just for Board Approval. The original document still shows all the revisions.” [4:49pm])

³³ John Witherspoon College has never had formal hiring procedures for faculty until I wrote them (and pushed really hard for their approval) in the last year. They were approved, though many years late.

³⁴ See *Newell Broadcasting*, “Glendive Man Going to Prison” (August 29, 2017). So confident was the President that, not only did Darrin Clinton teach, but our own students were sent on the College's very first overnight field trip at the Glendive bone/Bible museum. (But, hey, he was a complementarian-young-earth-creationist-baptist-inerrantist, and I guess that's what matters most.)

because the time has come to either radically pivot, or liquidate responsibly, and I fear and believe it is too late and too difficult for the former.

In closing, I hope it's clear why I cannot accept the offered half-term contract, why I can no longer support the school, and why I won't be at Convocation tomorrow. I feel sorry for you, for Dr. Wells (who I believe has done his very best) and the dire conditions of his wife and their leaving town (my congrats and blessings on his new position), and for our students. I hope you'll forgive me for my leave. At the end of the day, I am truly exhausted.

Above all, exhausted from having my conscience miserably vexed and flayed.

I say "leave," of course, because it's not a "resignation." My term expired this past July. I've been volunteering for this past month. In higher education, contracts are offered in the spring to give enough time to both the college and the faculty to prepare for the fall. JWC's policy, however, is 45 days before the start of the academic year *at the very latest*. Even though this is extremely generous, it has never been consistently followed in the entire history of John Witherspoon College. Faculty have been in constant (and needless) anxiety year after year, wondering when or if they will have a job. Some employment was offered *days after classes began*. This kind of situation is so plainly unjust (and unprofessional) that I won't speak further about it.

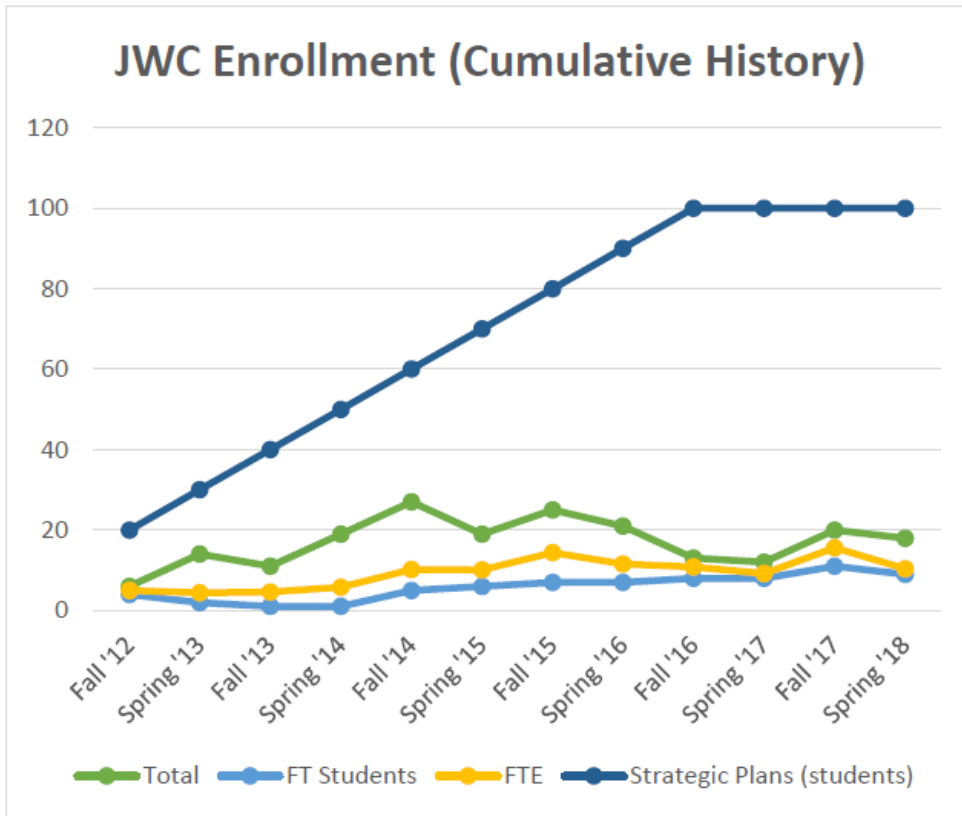
All of this means my family and I are quite vulnerable, but we hope new possibilities will emerge soon. And we lean on our friends through which we see God's grace in the midst. I do trust that, somehow, good will come from all of this.

I want to thank you again for the tremendous opportunity of serving at JWC over these years. We ask your prayers most particularly for the JWC students during this transition. We seek the Lord's face, invite the Spirit and presence of Christ, and strive ahead.³⁵

Sincere regards,
Jamin Andreas Hübner

³⁵ I wrote this letter under some tiring and anxious circumstances, but I believe it to be true to the best of my knowledge.

Visual Aids³⁶

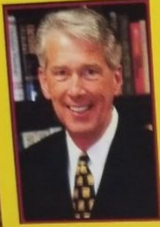


	Fall '12	Spring '13	Fall '13	Spring '14	Fall '14	Spring '15	Fall '15	Spring '16	Fall '16	Spring '17	Fall '17	Spring '18	
Total	6	14	11	19	27	19	25	21	13	12	20	18	
FT Students	4	2	1	1	5	6	7	7	8	8	11	9	
FTE (Full-time equivalent)	5	4.4	4.6	5.8	10.2	10.1333	3	14.4	11.6	10.8	9.2	15.6	10.4
Total credits	75	66	69	87	153	152	216	174	162	138	234	156	
Strategic Plans (students)	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	100	100	100	
Strategic Plans (credits)	240	360	480	600	720	840	960	1080	1200	1200	1200	1200	
Estimation difference (credits)	-69%	-82%	-86%	-86%	-79%	-82%	-78%	-84%	-87%	-89%	-81%	-87%	
Estimation difference (students)	-70%	-53%	-73%	-62%	-55%	-73%	-69%	-77%	-87%	-88%	-80%	-82%	

³⁶ The “54” count on the next page partly originates by including non-credit (auditing) students, which is a very creative (and, in my view, unethical) way of giving the public an impression of growth and raising funds. Note: The most important enrollment figure in higher ed is FTE (Full-Time Equivalent). The other is full-time students.

Future Home

Dear Friend of JWC,



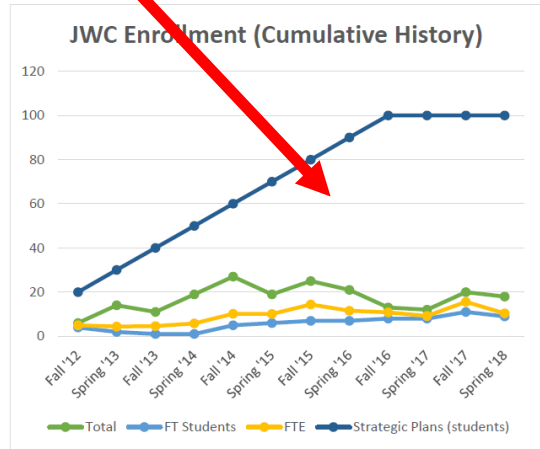
It's all about the new revolutionary generation—the ever-increasing numbers of young men and women God is bringing to JWC, preparing for salt-and-light leadership in a world that has never needed it more! From Day One, we have determined—God helping us—that finances would never keep a student from John Witherspoon College. No, more than that, we have pledged to help every student get their degree debt-free! That's a God-sized commitment; but God is able.

And now we are asking Him for a God-sized miracle. JWC has long outgrown our small Range Road campus—but we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to purchase an amazing new campus, the *Future Home* for generations of young Daniel's and Esther's. We are asking God to stir the hearts of His people to give—to purchase and equip this *Future Home* . . . debt-free. Debt-free . . . so that finances never keep a student from the best they can be for Christ.

Please pray. And please consider being part of the *Future Home* miracle. It really is all about the new revolutionary generation.

Soli Deo gloria,

C. Richard Wells
C. Richard Wells
President



JOHN WITHERSPOON COLLEGE

Fides Quaerens Intellectum

2017

The Year in Numbers

Number of countries/states where JWC Students, Faculty, and Staff served on Mission (16/17)

8

Number of Scholarships Awarded (36)

Total books catalogued in JWC Library

5,028

Celebrated 500th Anniversary of Protestant Reformation at Visio Dei Conference

500

Coffee consumed by President Wells

1,642 CUPS

Number of dollars need to purchase and equip Future Home of John Witherspoon College

1,000,000

Number of JWC Students in 2017

54

Total Campus Mortgage and Student Loan Debt

0

Percentage of Students Spring/Fall Semesters

Accomplishments to check off our Five-Year Strategic Plan

- Achieve Full Accreditation (TRACS)
- First JWC Student accepted into Graduate School
- Re-locate to permanent campus (in process!)
- 100 Students Enrolled
- Material support from at least thirty (30) churches.

Spring '16	Fall '16	Spring '17	Fall '17	Spring '18
21	13	12	20	18
7	8	8	11	9
11.6	10.8	9.2	15.6	10.4
174	162	138	234	156
90	100	100	100	100
1080	1200	1200	1200	1200
-84%	-87%	-89%	-81%	-87%
-77%	-87%	-88%	-80%	-82%

Post-Script Addendum (December, 2018)

On the Letter and Its Contents

- Note that in the square box highlight of the enrollment spreadsheet, the first row is number of students, second row number of full-time students, and last row number of full-time equivalent (FTE). The most generous reading of this data would be 20 students. The 54 figure remains a puzzle to all.
- Two typos in the original letter emerged: “non-nondenominational” (p. 6), which should simply read “nondenominational,” and “fan’s” should be “fans” (p. 8).
- One should note that the half-term contract offered by Dr. Wells was never actually offered. What I turned down in my leave was an unconfirmed verbal offer.
- Also, in showing this letter to Dr. (REDACTED), he was disturbed that his words were twisted to mean that he didn’t support my promotion to Dean. In fact, in an email to me (Aug 30), his hesitation was evidently due to not having talked to other faculty yet, not refusing his charge.
- Another matter that came to my attention after writing this letter had to do with the “official” reasons for my leave: gender. It is ironic that I was let go from an institution for supporting women in ministry when both of its Leadership Program Directors (Dr. Burton and Sherwood) were women. Both women have taught and/or teach *leadership to pastors* in their coursework at JWC.

New Developments Since This Letter Was Originally Written

- Within day after my final conversation with Dr. Wells, Wells conducted another heresy-hunt on a newly-hired history adjunct professor and, after interrogation, fired her immediately. In a private conversation with her later on, she described the whole encounter as “bizarre.”
- Not long after leaving the college, I was approached by some disgruntled elders of Christ Church. They were upset that the College continued to take advantage of them—in this case, by being asked to finance the new campus for \$750,000. I was shocked and confused, so I inquired further. What apparently happened was, right after the JWC Board declared not to buy the campus until 100% of the money was raised (i.e., no loans), President Wells asked his church for a \$750,000 loan to finance the new campus (hoping to tap into the Steinwandt’s other bequest funds, which were given to Christ Church). The board of CC naturally assumed that this was the will of the JWC Board, but it was in fact the unilateral maneuvering of the President. At any rate, the church wisely declined after discovering the high burn-rate.
- Then, around the same time, the board of Christ Church also said “no” to a request to use the Christ Church facilities for the JWC campus. It was earlier assumed that CC had plenty of rent-free space if the College ever wanted to use it. But this turned out not to be the case (and

not without reason, as the college library and faculty offices have already been at Christ Church—still for the College’s seventh year). This rejection was, I was informed, because the CC Board could not get a clear answer on how long this rent-free stay would last, and because it required municipal rezoning that would take very long and may not be approved anyway. Pastor Wells evidently begged the church to reconsider, because there was no place for the college to go (the old campus was supposed to close at the end of October), so this might mean the end of the College. But the CC Board remained firm in their decision.

- On December 7, Wells announced (via email) his resignation for the end of the semester and that Dr. Lewis would become “permanent President.” (Lewis was the 6th/7th presidential candidate, retired a year earlier from Dean, and is Wells’ long-time administrative subordinate). In Texas, Wells retains (unofficial) control over the college as “Chancellor.”