

2016

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Recommended Citation

Norton, T. D. (2016). Editorial: Accreditation in a Christian university: Its real purpose. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for Christians in Higher Education*, 7(1), 4-5. <https://doi.org/10.31380/sotlched.7.1.4>

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Accreditation in a Christian University: Its Real Purpose

by

Timothy D. Norton, Ed.D., General Editor

Recently I had the opportunity to share a devotion during the Oral Roberts University College of Education Assessment Day. The day was dedicated to the continued preparation for our Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) accreditation site visit. In contemplating the purpose of an accreditation review, I realized that a truly exemplary visit would be one that highlighted the people that make our college of education successful. To do this, I imagined the polishing of the jewels of a crown, with each jewel representing a particular group of individuals who exemplify the best in our college. Think of your own college and the people who make it successful as I describe the different aspects of the crown.

To make a crown, one needs a golden base. Gold is a precious metal and is very malleable. It represents the noble. In a sense, it represents the leadership of the college as seen in the dean and chairs. They hold the jewels in place by allowing them to rest easy in their respective parts of the crown. The jewels are able to shine as they are presented in the beauty of the golden metal. The gold's sheen allows for the facets of the jewels to reflect the light, helping others to see their beauty clearly.

The chief stone in a crown is the diamond, a precious gem that is very hard and, when pure, transparent. This is representative of the faculty, who lead the college in its intellectual pursuits. As such, they are relentless in assuring the quality of the presentation of knowledge. They are also best represented when they are transparent in their disciplines and to their students. They reflect the purity found in the acquisition of both knowledge and understanding, which can then be transferred to the students and shared with colleagues through the scholarship of teaching and learning.

The adjunct professors are represented by the rubies in the crown. The ruby is next in value and hardness to the diamond, and its beauty makes it highly esteemed in jewelry. Though generally red in color, the color may vary to shades of pink. Adjunct professors are like the ruby in that their position is seen as a valued part of the teaching profession, second only to the full-time professors. Their variations broaden the perspective of knowledge presented to students, which, in turn, becomes a beauty that is highly esteemed in the college.

The sapphire is a stone that comes in blue, red, violet, yellow, green, pink, orange, purple, and white, representing the great variety in our students. The sapphire's qualities include its beauty, magnificent colors, transparency, and its constancy and durability. All of these qualities are ones that our students demonstrate as they pursue their educational goals. They all have different desires and ambitions, symbolized through the varied reflections of color that are the sapphire.

Amethyst is a violet blue quartz crystal. Its uniqueness is revealed when combined with mercury, turning it purple, a color valued by royalty. The stone reflects our student leaders and honor students. By adding a distinctive to their lives through their service and scholarship, these students portray the qualities that are represented in the heraldry of princes. Their commitment to excellence and the bettering of the "crown" makes them shine as a reflection of royalty.

Surrounding the base of the crown and supplementing its reflecting jewels is the ermine. This fur lining signifies the royal nature of the crown's wearer. This complement to the glory of the crown represents the college administrative assistants and the various student workers, graduate assistants, and graduate recruiters. Their service supports the entire college and ensures that each of the jewels shines with its intended brilliance. They serve as the single part of the crown that can be viewed from all perspectives. In this, they augment the regal nature of the jeweled crown.

The only jewel in the crown that is created by a living thing is the pearl. Its value is based upon its purity, and its silvery brightness reflects that purity. It is the pearl that is referred to in the Scriptures as “the pearl of great price.” This pearl is the representation of the Kingdom of God, and it is this pearl that makes the crown a heavenly one. It is this pearl whose price was paid by the Son of God, and it is because of this pearl that we exclaim, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are created” (Revelation 4:11).

When CAEP or any accrediting agency comes to review a college, the team should not see just a crown, but they should see one who is representative of each person in the college through the reflection of its jewels and ermine. They should also see, in the brilliance of each stone, a different facet of the One the crown reflects.

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