

THE NEED FOR A  
**CHRISTIAN  
COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE**

THE SPIRITUAL, ACADEMIC, AND  
BUSINESS REASONS FOR A NEW  
TIER OF EDUCATION

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## Table of Contents

<b>SPIRITUAL CASE</b>	2
A Collaborative Solution	3
<b>ACADEMIC CASE</b>	4
<b>BUSINESS CASE</b>	5
Tuition Chart	6
Pricing Chart	7
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	8

## SPIRITUAL CASE

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

**Matthew 9:35-38 (NIV)**

Ministry is a calling that belongs to people in every vocation. Their job might be nursing or teaching or doing taxes, but their work—the calling of the Great Commission—is something Christian institutions recognize and understand. The task of developing and sending students is charged to us, institutions of higher education, which is why faith integration is a crucial part of our work.

The harvest is in our hospitals, nursing homes, schools, factories, and offices. We need students prepared to do ministry in their vocational contexts. That is the purpose of Christian higher education: to develop and send workers into the harvest field.

### **The Natural Selection Argument**

“Let struggling schools close.” You have likely heard this argument before: I’d call this the “natural selection” argument. It assumes when these schools finally shut down, the displaced students will flock to other struggling schools and rescue them financially. It also presumes that there is a limited number of students for the business model, and less competition means growth for surviving schools.

This argument is logical. However, there is no guarantee that these students will transfer to another private Christian institution rather than a public one. In fact, recent school closings have demonstrated this. Enrollment departments and presidents of many Christian schools often hear from families that a major barrier to enrollment is cost, perhaps contributing to this migration to public schools.

The natural selection argument is based on the assumption that there is nothing private Christian institutions can do to change the cost and pricing structure that is limiting their pool of customers in the first place. If they continue at the current price point for a four-year undergraduate degree, natural selection says their share of the pool will grow smaller and some schools will close, affording an opportunity for the healthy schools to recruit those displaced students at the high price point. It’s simple math. In the natural selection argument, the pool of customers never changes. Fewer providers equals more customers per provider.

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I think many are resigned to this argument, and it may be difficult to change their minds. But we should not concede yet. Instead, we should take another look at its premise.

Two truths are evident to me.

First, the harvest is plentiful and the workers are few. We don't need fewer institutions; we need more. Not all pulpits are made out of wood. We need our integrated faith/learning model in order to develop and send disciples into their vocational contexts. Until every man, woman and child has heard the gospel, we need more workers for the harvest, many of whom could come from your schools.

Second, we should pray to the Lord of the harvest to send workers into his harvest field. What if the pool was larger than we thought? What if it was 10 or even 20 times larger than any consultant has told us, or that we had dreamed about? What if our groupthink was wrong? The Bible seems to contradict our current paradigm. We need to ask ourselves, "What does the Lord want?"

There are more workers who need to be trained—much more. I believe we need to adapt our institutions to serve this larger customer base, and we can do this without a radical change to our current model. I believe we can create a scenario where students are educated and disciplined at a more affordable price.

## A Collaborative Solution

Here is an idea that we sourced from conversations with several of you and your colleagues that could grow the pool of prospective students: a Christian community college network. This is how it works.

**Enlist Institutions to Build Courses** | Any residential Christian institution can choose to join. We will enlist 5-10 pioneering institutions in the United States to create courses in the areas of study where they have a strong reputation. Collectively, these courses will be part of a new type of online community college associate degree, taught by the most engaging faculty from these pioneering institutions.

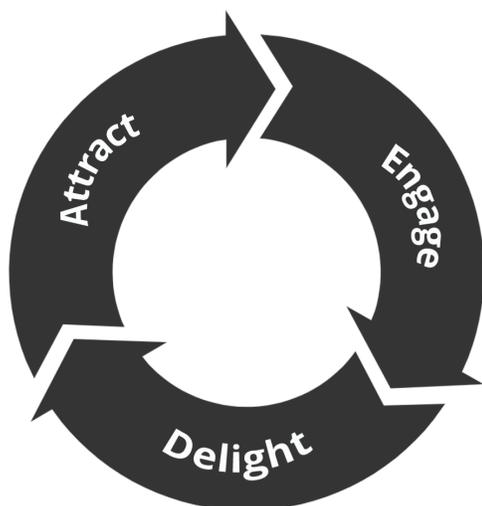
**Identify High-Risk Schools** | We then identify 50 schools that are at risk of closing due to high cost and declining enrollment, inviting them to purchase our new type of online course at a price point that will allow them to lower their cost dramatically, widening the pool of students they can recruit. For many schools, this model could be their lifeline.

**Recruit a New Kind of Student** | These 50 partnering schools will start recruiting an entirely new type of customer that cannot currently afford higher-priced education options. Survey and focus group evidence suggests that this model will help a new population of learners gain access to a Christ-centered education.

This model also helps institutions approach lead generation like a flywheel, not a funnel—a strategy that keeps customers engaged throughout their lifecycle, not just

during the pre-enrollment stages. The flywheel model removes points of friction for students throughout their educational experience, building momentum by attracting, engaging and delighting them. This momentum later turns them into promoters of your institution, when they will recommend your school to friends, family and future generations of students.

## Flywheel



**Engage Online Students on Campus** | Tuition costs in this new model will mirror many of today's community colleges, but unlike the current community college model, these students will live on the campuses of partnering schools, in residence halls, gaining access to spiritual formation and personal development opportunities while paying room and board at current rates.

## ACADEMIC CASE

### Faculty Roles and the Student Experience

In two years or less, learners can earn an associate degree in this blended model. Coursework is largely delivered online while simultaneously being facilitated face-to-face. For every course, a student will have two faculty members: an online subject matter expert (SME) who teaches the content via video, and an in-person instructor who advises and grades. These two faculty members are co-instructors of the course.

One instructor is an expert faculty member, delivering engaging instruction through professionally-produced video. For the purpose of this paper, we will call this faculty member the **SME-instructor**. The other co-instructor will mentor, disciple, tutor, and track progress with learners in person. We'll call this faculty member the **advisor-instructor**. The advisor-instructor role offers a lighter teaching load, and could even be



filled by an instructor employed full-time by a partnering institution. That choice is unique to each institution's needs and current staffing.

From a faculty development perspective, this model has the potential to benefit SME-instructors. These instructors could hold semi-annual webinars and/or online discussion groups for the advisor-instructors who teach their courses. These webinars offer opportunities for advisor-instructors to provide feedback on the course content and gain a deeper understanding of the course design decisions that were made by the SME-instructor. These interactions also serve the vital function of continuous curricular improvement that is documented and provided to all partner institutions for accreditation purposes.

After earning their associate degrees, learners can then transition to fully in-person learning at their choice of partner institutions where they can continue their education. Participating schools will enjoy this larger pool of transfer students, attracting those who desire an integrated faith and learning experience but might have enrolled at a different school due to cost barriers.

This model is similar to partnerships you share now with community college systems, except for one major difference: these community college students are living on our campuses, attending our chapels, being discipled by our residence life staff, while also stewarding unused capacity at our current price point.

## **BUSINESS CASE**

### **A New Tier of Education**

Institutions that want to participate can offer this program as a more cost-effective option—a different tier. For example, consider Toyota and Lexus, or Chevrolet and Cadillac. Companies like Toyota recognize that they can better serve customers when they offer the product at varying price points (e.g., selling both the mass market Toyota brand as well as the higher-tier Lexus luxury brand). What if we did the same? College tuition as a whole has increased significantly over the last 20 years. What if we continued to offer the Lexus option we have now—a higher-priced, face-to-face four-year degree program—but added the Toyota brand and price point?

What does the new Toyota model look like as opposed to a Lexus? In this analogy, you can buy a Lexus and take all of your courses face-to-face at a higher price point. Or start with a Toyota, taking your associate degree online at the partner institution of your choosing, then transfer to face-to-face learning to complete your bachelor's degree. The Lexus costs \$36,000 before discounts; the Toyota costs \$18,000.



## Tuition Chart

	Lexus (in person)	Toyota (online)
Tuition	\$28,000	\$10,000
Room & Board	\$8,000	\$8,000
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Total	\$36,000	\$18,000

Institutions that do not want to offer the community college model remain exclusively face-to-face and recruit the higher price point customer. However, they can still make additional revenue by selling content on the platform, and once these Christian community college students complete their first two years of study, these institutions have the opportunity to recruit them.

I see opportunities for every institution that offers this new tier. Instead of brand dilution, this model creates a new pathway for students who cannot afford the traditional Lexus model. Notre Dame and St. Mary’s College are currently offering successful, real-world examples of this.

### How It Works with CampusEDU

CampusEDU is building the platform that will allow this shared course model to work.

Campus will sell the courses for \$600 to the receiving institution, and we propose institutions offer these classes to their students for \$1,000. Institutions are in control of what courses they offer and what they charge for them, but in order for this model to work as designed, their current processes must adapt.



## Pricing Chart

	<b>Originating Institution</b>	<b>\$200</b>
	<b>SME Instructor</b>	<b>\$50</b>
	<b>Advisor Instructor + Admin Costs</b>	<b>\$150</b>
	<b>CampusEDU</b>	<b>\$200</b>
<b>+</b>		
.....		
	<b>Wholesale Cost</b>	<b>\$600</b>
	<b>Gross Margin</b>	<b>\$400</b>
<b>=</b>	<b>Student Cost (Price Per Course)</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>

The \$18,000 non-discounted price referenced earlier consists of 10 courses per year (at \$1,000 per course) plus \$8,000 for room and board, totaling approximately \$18,000 without any discounts. Schools will make a gross margin of 40% on their courses plus their profit on room and board with very little overhead; all the while they have created a new pipeline of students ready to engage at the higher tier, fully in-person option.

Our model also allows sending institutions to sell their content to receiving institutions. We even pay sending SME-faculty a royalty on their intellectual property. Facilitators are hired to instruct the courses, so there are fewer demands on the sending institution or its faculty. The sending institution will receive \$200 per registration, and their authoring faculty will receive \$50 per registration—great margins for their intellectual property.

Instead of waiting for the community college system to send you students, our model creates an online learning experience that competes with a community college price point while offering the classic, faith-integrated college experience. No brand dilution, and we've incorporated Lexus parts in a Toyota-tier product. The result is a happy customer ready to convert to the in-person learning experience.

In a manner, this is already happening. Students are engaging in lower-priced options, hoping to transfer them into face-to-face schools: Sophia, StraighterLine, local community college credit, high school dual credit, and so on. College students are paying tuition to companies like Sophia instead of their institution and later applying these credits toward their degree programs. Our estimation is that this is happening 10-20% of the time.

## **CONCLUSION**

These lower-priced options are only growing, but our own model could provide a faith-based alternative in the market. Even students who study online desire a connection to the traditional campus climate with brick-and-mortar buildings, because it offers them a connection to something that feels legitimate and tangible—a place to call home and grow deeper in spiritual maturity.

Campus is proposing a collaborative model with benefits for students, faculty and the larger institution. We envision a cooperation in which participating institutions win and students are prepared and sent on behalf of the Kingdom. More workers for the harvest—and an innovative response to the Great Commission.

Campus is building the platform to make this network possible. To find out more, visit [www.campusedu.com](http://www.campusedu.com)