

IBOE Missional Review

for

Ambrose University College Calgary, Alberta

Site-Visit Conducted
12th - 14th April 2010

International Board of Education Missional Review

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A Missional Review team site-visit is a requirement of the International Board of Education (IBOE) for an institution of higher education that is connected to the Church of the Nazarene. All 54 colleges, universities, seminaries, Bible institutes, schools of nursing and teacher education participate in the process.

The Missional Review is not the work of one person writing his or her opinion about the institution but it is the opportunity for institution-wide self-evaluation—from students, alumni, faculty, staff, administration, and board representatives. The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene requires the Commissioner of Education and the International Board of Education to verify that the policies of the College are clearly set by the duly elected Board of Governors and that implementation of those policies is clearly in the hands of the administration of the College.

This is an historic missional review because Ambrose University College is the amalgamation of the Canadian Nazarene College (CNC) and the Canadian Bible College and Canadian Theological Seminary (CBC/CTS). Ambrose is jointly owned and sponsored by the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada (CMA) and the Church of the Nazarene Canada (CotN). The Board of Governors holds the College in trust for the good of these two founding churches that support and depend upon it for higher education. This review, however, is restricted to addressing the way in which Ambrose is fulfilling its mission as expressed by one of the two founding denominations, the Church of the Nazarene. In hosting this on-site event, Ambrose University College is fulfilling the Missional Review request of the CotN by answering the question: “Are we fulfilling the mission the Church of the Nazarene Canada brought us into existence to fulfil?”

The Panel members wish to express appreciation to the President, Dr Howard Wilson, and the Chancellor, Dr Riley Coulter, and other members of the Ambrose administration, staff and students for extending such warm hospitality to us and for being so transparent in their responses to the probing of the Panel.

The members of this IBOE Missional Review Panel are

- Dr Anthony Manswell
Provost, Caribbean Nazarene College, Port of Spain, Trinidad
- Dr Terry Read
Retired missionary educator, Church of the Nazarene, Escondido, California

- Dr Kent E Brower, chair
IBOE chair, Vice-Principal and Senior Research Fellow in Biblical Studies, Nazarene Theological College, Manchester
- Dr E LeBron Fairbanks
Education Commissioner, International Church of the Nazarene, Kansas City (observer)
- Revd Terry Fach
Regional Education Co-ordinator for Canada, Calgary (observer).

Report

The Panel report consists of three major sections:

- 1 Background
- 2 Observations
- 3 Conclusions

The section entitled Observations is gleaned from the interviews the Panel conducted and documents to which it had access to during its visit. This section should be read with care because it gives some context to the conclusions that the Panel reached and the suggestions for reflection that the Panel made. The Conclusions, based upon the documentation submitted to the Panel, as well as the discussions and interviews, are for reflection by the Ambrose and represent the collegial and peer review function of the site-visit process. They provide a snapshot of the institution while on-site and may be based on an incomplete understanding of the institution's context. However, they represent the best judgement of the Panel based on the information to hand and the knowledge they brought to the task.

SUMMARY

In the overall judgement of the Panel, Ambrose University College fulfils the criteria for the benchmarks of quality established by the IBOE (International Board of Education) to assess adherence to its mission. Ambrose is intentionally designed to promote the mission and preserve the theological legacy of the two founding denominations. In the judgement of the Panel, Ambrose is now well placed to make an increasingly significant contribution to the Church of the Nazarene Canada and the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada within their systems of higher education.

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Ambrose University College is a new institution that is the lineal descendent of two independent institutions, the Canadian Bible College/ Canadian Theological Seminary (CBC/CTS), located in Regina, Saskatchewan, and the Canadian Nazarene College (CNC), located in Winnipeg, Manitoba.
- 1.2 In Winnipeg, CNC enjoyed the benefits of being an Approved Teaching Centre of the University of Manitoba and a partnership in the Winnipeg theological Consortium for offering the University of Winnipeg Master of Divinity degree. However, by 1990, when Dr. Coulter was elected President of CNC, the challenges of persistent low enrolment, declining provincial government financial support and a 40 acre campus with nine buildings in need of significant upgrading, led to the conclusion that CNC was not sustainable into the future.
- 1.3 In 1995, CNC relocated to Calgary. This move was deemed to be a more favourable context for development. Alberta's Private Colleges Accreditation Board (PCAB) enabled CNC to receive accreditation for its degree courses. In 2000, an initial slate of degrees was approved and Nazarene University College (NUC) joined Alberta's higher education environment, developing a range of Arts and Science programs.
- 1.4 Factors similar to those motivating the move of CNC from Winnipeg emerged in the CBC/CTS. In response, it adopted a comprehensive strategic plan that would broaden its educational mandate to include Arts and Science programming. The CMA approached NUC to share a campus if they moved CBC/CTS to Calgary. This was approved by the NUC Board of Governors. In April 2000 CBC/CTS relocated to Calgary and made application for degree granting status to the PCAB. It also entered into a collaborative model of educational programming with NUC. CBC/CTS moved with strong ministry programs and a vision for cooperation in "kingdom ministry".
- 1.5 Degree granting status for what would become Alliance University College (AUC) was initially received in 2004 and AUC/NUC began the journey of increasing levels of integration. Technical and cultural differences required constant negotiation, codification and clarification.
- 1.6 In May 2007, an Order of Council from the Province of Alberta vested the degree granting rights of AUC and NUC in Ambrose University College. Legal merger resolved many of the complications of dual existence and has precipitated a comprehensive revision and harmonization of policies and procedures at every level of the organization. This process is ongoing and is creating a more open and transparent pattern of institutional life.
- 1.7 CNC Ltd is a legal entity governed by a Board of Directors set up to act as trustee of the Nazarene assets within Ambrose. It has three representatives on the Ambrose Board of Governors.

2 Observations

During its three day visit to Ambrose, the Panel conducted extensive interviews with the following:

- Senior Management Team (SMT)
- President and Chancellor (PC)
- Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Chair of Undergraduate Ministry and Seminary programs (VP)
- Executive of Canadian Nazarene College, Ltd. (Directors)
- Selected members of Faculty (faculty)
- Students
- Chancellor

As a result of these intensive interviews and the excellent and extensive support documentation, the Panel was able to form a reasonably reliable picture about Ambrose.

Challenges facing Ambrose

- 2.1 The Panel expressed its fascination with the emergence of Ambrose and asked the SMT about challenges to be met. Two particular challenges were noted: relocation and financing of a new campus; blending of student and faculty cultures. The relocation financial challenges are formidable but are being managed. In human terms, two groups mourned the loss of their original campuses in Winnipeg and Regina, then subsequently the loss of the city centre campus. Because students change, a new identity is formed rather more quickly than for faculty and staff. The faculty cultures and interests also needed to be blended, with the one focused on bible and ministry (AUC) and one on arts and sciences (NUC). This is an ongoing project, but was initially a challenge. The SMT agreed that Ambrose will wish to do more to celebrate the separate schools' histories and legacies.
- 2.2 The Panel asked about constituency perception and learned that this was a challenge primarily centred around the identity and purposes of a university college (liberal arts model in US). This move raised suspicions about motives, loss of denominational purpose, and denominational agendas. Students are far less denominationally orientated; the suspicions of constituents have been addressed by Ambrose through 37 listening events across Canada over the past year. These have been valuable in allowing Ambrose to affirm the message that it is both fully Nazarene and fully CMA. In the wider higher education community, the Ambrose project has attracted significant positive attention.
- 2.3 The Panel team agreed with Ambrose that the key question is "Does Ambrose serve the educational interests of the two founding denominations?" Nazarene student numbers remain low: there are only 37 self-identified Nazarene students at Ambrose, although anecdotal evidence suggests the actual head count is higher. Hence, the number of Nazarenes being served by CNC and its descendents has probably remained static or

even dropped since the move to Calgary. But the service of the CotN through CNC and its descendents to the wider Christian community has been significantly enhanced. Ambrose makes no attempt to distinguish students denominationally but strives to ensure that a Nazarene student does not feel that the experience at Ambrose is non-Nazarene. One Nazarene student felt that the chapel services in particular were 'too Alliance' but that may not reflect the wider view. In general, they experience the diverse character of the college as a very positive dimension to the Ambrose experience.

Mission

- 2.4 The Panel asked about the mission alignment of Ambrose with both the CMA and the CotN. In response the President cited the orientation of both founding churches to growth. But in order to avoid a sectarian approach, a fairly bland and generic mission statement has been adopted. The Panel urged Ambrose to articulate its mission statement in a way that would more clearly identify Ambrose as the lineal descendent of the two founding denominations and to address the question of what it means to be God's holy people in the twenty-first century. The Panel was surprised to learn that the Collins Holiness series is no longer part of Ambrose's academic calendar and suggested that this be re-instated as one way for Ambrose to provide theological engagement with this question.
- 2.5 The Panel noted the statement in the self-study that "Ambrose's commitment to the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition is embedded within its organizational life." The Panel asked for an explanation of this and for some evidence of its validity. Responses left the impression that this embedding was not particularly deep nor were its implications well worked out. Formal commitment to one of the two statements of faith contributes to embedding the ethos but there was broad agreement at Ambrose that more work needs to be done on it, especially at faculty level. Ambrose acknowledged that the process of moving, merging, building, etc. has demanded so much time and energy that this aspect of institution building did not receive the attention it deserved. The Panel believes that the Ambrose theological alignment should be underpinned by a more vigorous mission statement and, once that is done, an intentional orientation of new faculty and staff to the ethos of Ambrose in expressing this commitment to students and constituency.
- 2.6 The Panel learned from students that they are very satisfied with Ambrose. The personal community feel of Ambrose and the caring relationships were notable pluses. Spiritual formation is a very positive part of the Ambrose experience: chapels, the integration of faith, learning and living, resident floor meetings. They noted concerns about costs, distance from home and the isolation of suburban location are detracting factors but not decisively against Ambrose.
- 2.7 The Panel asked about the engagement of Ambrose with the international CotN. It learned that Ambrose has been actively engaged including the work of the Chancellor. Ambrose is also hosting the 2011 Nazarene

Student Leaders Conference and Ambrose faculty participate in Global events. The Panel encourages Ambrose faculty to be part of the Nazarene Academy for International Educators (AIE), the Global Theology and Faith, Learning and Living Conference. It suggests that Ambrose re-visit moribund articulation agreements such as that which was brokered with Caribbean Nazarene College in Trinidad.

Ministry Preparation

- 2.8 The Panel noted the success of the ministry preparation programs at Ambrose and asked how Ambrose could help strengthen ministerial preparation in the CotN. The Panel was told that Ambrose has already extended this fully to the CotN and is willing to use the expertise that has grown from its CMA supervised ministry experience programs. The CotN has been slow to reciprocate to this point. The Panel is of the firm view that all Ministerial Development Centres in Canada (MDC) should operate under the auspices and academic quality control of Ambrose through the REC. The Panel is pleased to note that discussions are already occurring and that Ambrose is already working with the REC to enhance the quality and credibility of MDCs. The Panel also urges Ambrose to continue its revision of its undergraduate COSAC-approved (the Nazarene Course of Study Advisory Committee) Course of Study and urges it to bring its MDiv into line with COSAC requirements as well. This will ensure that graduates from Ambrose with the MDiv would have met the outcomes requirements for ordination.
- 2.9 The Panel was interested to see how differences between the CMA and the CotN would affect ministerial education. The Panel was told that differences do exist between the CMA and CotN polity and practice (ordination of women, infant baptism and the understanding of scripture) but respect, open discussion and avoidance of proselytization are the norm. Ambrose CMA theologians seem to be irenic and open to the perspectives of Nazarene and other students amongst this diverse student body in which the single-largest group is neither Nazarene nor Alliance. Nevertheless, the Panel is of the view that an increased number of theological faculty with their roots in the CotN would enhance the strength of Ambrose and its theological identity.
- 2.10 The Panel asked how Ambrose would contribute to ministerial preparation in the future. The Directors noted that the Canadian Sourcebook for Ministerial Development still gives a normal path to ordination as attending and graduating from Ambrose, and attending and graduating from Nazarene Theological Seminary. However, in practice most are now preparing for ministry through online courses at NNU or NBC, or through the US Modular Course of Study independent of, or in conjunction with, MDCs. Two problems, debt and distance, made education through Ambrose a challenge to some people. Distance has always been part of Canadian identity both inside and outside the church. The Panel expressed its firm conviction that Ambrose should be more directly involved in ministerial education for the CotN, including Master of Divinity degree

level, which would become one of the preferred routes to ordination in Canada.

- 2.11 The Panel learned that the CMA has just voted to re-instate a policy that all missionary candidates must have an MDiv from Ambrose. (When that requirement was dropped by the CMA some years ago, it killed CTS in Regina.) The Panel is of the view that this will strengthen the seminary at Ambrose in the intermediate term and that the CotN should have more engagement with the enhancement of the seminary program at Ambrose as a matter of urgency. A key part of this might well be another Nazarene appointment to a post in the Faculty of Theology which currently has one Nazarene.

Academic Context and Mission

- 2.12 The issue of academic freedom was raised by the Panel. It was clear that no one was constrained within this academic context to compromise either their own beliefs or prevented from the pursuit of truth.
- 2.13 The Panel asked faculty members to articulate the mission of Ambrose and to demonstrate how it affects them. Each member responded in turn, focusing upon some variation of redemptive engagement that reflected their respective disciplines but also noted that they are still working out what that means in each of their courses. The Panel was impressed with the range and sophistication of their responses, while at the same time wondering to what extent these responses emerged out of the convictions of the CMA and the CotN. It was also heartened by the range of courses that are rooted either indirectly or directly in the concerns of Wesleyan theology and spirituality. But for the most part, the Wesleyan holiness emphasis is in the people – perhaps that is where it ought principally to rest – rather than in statements or explicit course content. In addition to the usual range of courses, spiritual formation happens in a variety of contexts – residences, athletic fields, chapels and the modeling provided by faculty, staff and other students. But faculty acknowledged that most CotN or CMA students do not have a good knowledge of their own traditions.

CNC Ltd.

- 2.14 The Panel asked the Directors to explain the role of CNC Ltd. in the Ambrose governance. The Panel learned that its primary role is to be the custodian of CNC Ltd. assets and to elect president of CNC Ltd., who holds a senior administrative role at Ambrose (currently as Chancellor, but could be as President). The Panel pressed this issue and learned that there is some ambiguity between the current Board Policy Manual and the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). It was the view of the Panel that the President of CNC Ltd. should sit on the Ambrose Board of Governors as a non-voting member. The Ambrose President concurred with the view of the Panel that this connection should include explicit reference in the BPM to the President of CNC Ltd. being ex officio on Ambrose board. The role of the Chancellor also needed to be clarified in the BPM and harmonized with

the MOA as a matter of immediate action, not when there is an urgent need to do so, or a vacancy.

- 2.15 The Panel noted that the MOA deals mainly with assets, but asked the Directors where the ethos of the church is fostered in Ambrose. The response was that that was the rationale for current organization but that this is not articulated in the CNC Ltd. policy manual. The Directors noted that much of this responsibility is invested in the Chancellor's role, but the Panel wondered whether this was too dependent upon the current incumbent. The Panel also learned that the Directors confirm the election of the President of Ambrose. In the recent election of Ambrose's new President, the National Board of Canada chair interviewed the elected candidate to explore theological alignment. The Directors noted that they have no explicit voice beyond the hiring of the President. Indirectly, however, the Directors indicated that the Nazarene identity in the faculty of theology was "on the front burner" with the VP for Academic Affairs.

The Future

- 2.16 The Panel learned that Ambrose has a goal of enrolling 1000 FTE-equivalent students by 2014 and a long term goal of 2500. Eighty percent of Ambrose students are from Alberta – new initiatives are in place to make Ambrose a national college. To reach these goals, Ambrose needs to develop a new program every year. An online graduate ministry program will be launched for next year. The Panel believed that this could be a significant response to the needs of Canadians who were called to ministry but could not relocate in Ambrose, as well as strengthening the on-campus experience. The Panel also suggests that this video-conferencing should be seriously considered so that students across Canada could access the classrooms of Ambrose in real time. The President noted that significant expertise in these areas is already available at Ambrose and in Alberta through the example of Athabasca University, a world leader in distance, online education. The Panel also encouraged Ambrose to look at Northwest Nazarene University's model for online delivery.
- 2.17 The Panel noted that Ambrose benefits from a government grant of \$2.7 million, based on per capita in certain programs, with very few strings attached. The President noted that this was fairly stable but the challenge is to raise \$5 M per year to advance and meet goals. This will require a broader donor base. The Panel noted the financial pressures for the future but were reassured by the fact that Ambrose operated in the black last year.
- 2.18 The Panel asked about the importance of its historical roots to the future of Ambrose. It learned that Ambrose considers the whole success of its re-branding strategy to be a vital part of the story of Ambrose's future.
- 2.19 The Panel learned that other smaller holiness tradition groups have expressed interest in joining the Ambrose partnership. The Ambrose Board has authorized the President to engage in these discussions.

3 CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 In the overall judgement of the Panel, Ambrose fulfils the criteria for the benchmarks of quality established by the IBOE to assess adherence to its mission. Ambrose is an institution that has emerged from independent entities that faced uncertain futures into an innovative partnership between the CMA and the CotN. The two independent institutions, CBC/CTS and CNC, have merged into one entity which is intentionally designed to promote the mission and preserve the theological legacy of the two founding denominations. In the judgement of the Panel, Ambrose is now well placed to make an increasingly significant contribution to the CotN and the CMA within their systems of higher education. A number of points of commendation and suggestions for reflection are made in the spirit of supporting the institution in its development.

Commendations

- 3.2 The Panel is very appreciative of the excellent and ongoing work that has been put into a Board Policy Manual (BPM) that will enable Ambrose to be governed effectively and according to sound policies.
- 3.3 The Panel commends the clarity of the vision articulated by the President and the Senior Management team in its plans for the growth of Ambrose from its current size to a strong and healthy institution within the next decade. It also commends Ambrose for its world-wide vision articulated through a variety of programs and initiatives within the College and beyond.
- 3.4 The Panel is particularly pleased with the gradual roll-out of new academic programs as well as the strength of its supervised ministry experience programs.
- 3.5 The Panel was impressed with the evidence of the integration of faith, life and learning in their respective disciplines by faculty members. The Panel was also impressed by the demonstrated commitment of the faculty to the ethos and identity of Ambrose and expressed in its mission and vision statements as elaborated in its core values. The Panel also commends the Ambrose faculty for the evidence of rigorous critical thinking and redemptive engagement with their students and the wider community.
- 3.6 The Panel is aware of the enormously complex period of transition within the past decade that culminated in the formation of Ambrose as a new institution. The Panel is particularly impressed with the development of excellent facilities – well-designed, distinctive and functional. The Panel also commends the Ambrose development team for the way they have managed to finance this new enterprise and to mount a range of newly approved degree programs.

- 3.7 The Panel is aware of the great difference in size between the founding denominations in Canada (approximately 14,000 for the Church of the Nazarene; approximately 120,000 for the C&MA [2008 statistics from CMA website]). It is, therefore, grateful for the sensitivity and generosity of spirit with which the merger and partnership between the two founding institutions has generally been handled. (The unanimous support of the founding denominations of the appointment of the new Ambrose President is a case in point.) The Panel is especially grateful for the strong commitment of the President and senior leadership to the strengthening of the links between Ambrose and its founding denominations.
- 3.8 The Panel is aware of the distress, including the trauma of redundancies, associated with momentous change particularly by those who are directly affected (faculty and staff), but not themselves in control of the process. The Panel senses that there is a growing 'Ambrose ownership' at all levels, from CNC Ltd Board to faculty. Territorialism is declining, allowing for affirmation and celebration of the past along with optimism for the future of Ambrose. The re-branding of Ambrose has been well conceived and effective.
- 3.9 The Panel is impressed with the enthusiasm for Ambrose demonstrated by the students it interviewed. They have embraced the strengths of Ambrose – community, academic quality, personal attention to individual students by staff, opportunities for service, prayer times in residence, chapels – while accepting the challenges of the transition from a city centre to a suburban campus.
- 3.10 The Panel commends Ambrose for its innovative scholarship program (The Servant Leadership Church Scholarship) that is challenging churches to identify and support students in partnership with Ambrose.

Recommendations

- 3.11 **Mission.** The Panel spent considerable time reflecting on and discussing the mission statement of Ambrose. It is of the view that the current statement is too generic, applicable to almost any Christian liberal arts institution. While the core values elaborate and support this mission statement, the statement itself needs to capture succinctly that Ambrose is the lineal descendent of the two founding institutions, and address the question, "What does it mean to be part of God's holy people in the 21st Century?" The Panel recommends that Ambrose revisit this mission statement with a view to strengthening it in a direction that more closely reflects the distinctive contribution Ambrose, as a college of the C&MA and CotN, makes to the wider body of Christ in the mission of the triune God to the world.
- 3.12 **Canadian Nazarene College Ltd.** The Panel recommends that the Chancellor work with the Board of Directors of Canadian Nazarene College Ltd. to formulate and implement policies for succession planning. The Panel believes this will ensure that strong leadership emerges to provide a

continuing quality contribution to Ambrose. The Board should consider how it can be a consistent advocate for Ambrose and help the CotN access the rich resources of Ambrose. It also urges the Chancellor to work with this Board of Directors to see their contribution to Ambrose on behalf of the Church of the Nazarene in terms of ethos as well as their legal responsibility for financial assets.

- 3.13 **Governance.** The Panel sees ambiguity between the Memorandum of Agreement and the Board Policy Manual on matters of Ambrose Board of Governors membership, succession, and the meaning of ‘senior management post’. It urges Ambrose to bring the BPM into harmony with the Memorandum of Agreement and to clarify the meaning of these terms. The Panel also suggests that the Ambrose Board consider including the President of CNC Ltd. as a non-voting member of the Board.
- 3.14 **Ministerial Course of Study.** The Panel commends the steps that Ambrose is taking to work with the REC for the CotN in Canada to deliver COSAC approved courses for Nazarene ministerial preparation. The Panel recommends that Ambrose continue to work directly with the REC in developing validated degree programs at Ambrose and that the MDCs in Canada function under the academic umbrella of Ambrose. The Panel is also of the view that Ambrose should consider ways in which the MDiv could be developed in a way to become a recognised COSAC route to ordination in the Church of the Nazarene. The Panel urges Ambrose to appoint another Nazarene member to the theological faculty at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.15 **Delivery Systems.** The Panel commends the President for his direction to the Vice-President for Academic Affairs to develop new delivery options (online courses and video conferencing) for ministerial courses of study. The Panel is of the view that these options will be another way in which Ambrose can serve its whole Canadian constituency more effectively. The Panel urges that these courses be developed in such a way that they are accessible and recognised for ministerial preparation by COSAC as well as the C&MA.
- 3.16 **Support for the Church of the Nazarene in Canada.** The Panel is of the view that Ambrose is one of the success stories of the CotN and the CMA. The Panel believes that Ambrose should be a catalyst for revitalizing the Church of the Nazarene in Canada. The Panel therefore urges Ambrose *as a whole* to take a proactive role in hosting and facilitating an All-Canada Conference for leaders (lay and clergy) of the denomination in Canada. This should include members of all boards and committees including National Board, Administrators’ Fellowship, COSAC Canada, CNC Ltd. Board of Directors, NYI Council, District Advisory Boards, Boards of Ministerial Credentials and key lay representatives from church boards. This conference would have its primary focus on corporate worship, re-visioning the mission of the denomination in Canada and devising a strategic plan towards this renewed vision. In providing this leadership, the Panel believes

that such a conference would advance *both* the mission of the Church of the Nazarene in Canada *and* that of Ambrose University College.

Action

3.17 The Panel requests that the REC report to the IBOE in February 2011 on the response of Ambrose to these recommendations.

Respectfully submitted

Anthony Manswell
Terry Read
Kent Brower, chair
Terry Fach, observer
LeBron Fairbanks, observer

20 April 2010