

PURPOSE AND RATIONALE OF AN ECS UNIVERSITY

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In the context of ECS University, purpose and rationale are clearly interdependent. In seeking to establish the purpose and rationale of the proposed ECS University, it will be necessary to identify significant indicators relating not only the ECS's vision and mission, but also to establishing the *need* for a further university. This will involve identifying the anticipated *share of the overall university sector market* which an ECS University is likely to attract in the short, medium and long term future. Similarly, the ECS will also need to determine the extent of the emphasis it wishes to place on the theological segment of the market, arising from its wish to incorporate Bishop Gwynne Theological College into the university and for consideration to be given to the incorporation of the other five ECS Theological Colleges in the context of a geographically dispersed university.

Purpose of an ECS University - Whilst it is obvious that students cannot pursue every discipline offered by a university, it is accepted that such institutions benefit from encounters with the interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation generated by the intellectual discourse between the various disciplines. Accordingly, the aim of an ECS University would be to provide a range of faculties capable of facilitating personal and collective consideration of what constitutes objective truth; enhancing students' comprehension of the scope of human knowledge and its consideration from various perspectives; playing a key role in the quality and extent of the student experience; and facilitating cross-cultural interaction between academic disciplines. Practically understood, this requires each of a university's academic faculty to be actively committed to the *open search for truth* and the *dissemination of universal knowledge* within a Christian framework of understanding.

In addition to its commitment to provide quality education and contribute to the development of South Sudan, the unique contribution of an ECS University would be its commitment to the spiritual nurture and formation of students i.e. *humanity making* - not only the educational and professional development of students. Understood from a cognitive perspective, the development of the spiritual dimension is not an optional extra in education since spiritual health and intellectual growth intersect to create wholeness. Accordingly, the purpose and rationale for an ECS University need not be established solely on theological or religious grounds. They can also be established on the understanding that the development of the spiritual dimension is central to the educational process. Therefore, the holistic education offered by an ECS University would potentially benefit society in general.

The Theology Faculty of and ECS University

The feasibility study report advises that a Theological Faculty/School of Divinity should be regarded as the principal faculty in an ECS University. Such advice does not imply a hierarchy of the curriculum. Epistemologically and practically understood the Theology Faculty would potentially be instrumental in exemplifying, influencing and manifesting the university's Christian foundation and constitute a practical, fundamental expression of the University's Christian foundation. Such exemplification is important because no institution is a value free zone. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that the body of knowledge transmitted by various faculties in accordance with a Christian world-view. Accordingly, it will be necessary for the ECS to determine the extent and role of Bishop Gwynne Theological College and the other five ECS Theological Colleges which it is proposes should be incorporated into the proposed university.

South Sudan's Current Public University Provision – At the time of independence the country inherited nine public universities. The country also has sixteen private universities which, at present, have no government recognition. To address this unsatisfactory situation, the GoSS is planning to license and quality control private universities, and to pass a Higher Education Bill to regulate higher education institutions. Clearly, it will be necessary for the ECS to plan its proposed university in accordance with the emergent requirements and to ensure continuing compliance.

At the independence celebrations held at Juba University, President Salva Kiir Mayardit, acknowledged the centrality of higher education to the development of the new republic when he said;

“I appeal to you all both academic staff and administrators of our public universities to put your minds together and come up with well studied recommendations and plans for strengthening our institution, which must become the pillars of nation-building”.

In accordance with the decision passed by South Sudan Council of Ministers - which required all the colleges of South Sudan universities to complete repatriation by the end of December 2010 - the universities of Juba, Upper Nile, and Bahr El Ghazal have returned to their original campuses. However, there has been considerable reluctance amongst North Sudanese academics to relocate to South Sudan. Previously they formed sixty five per cent of the teaching staff whereas now the percentage is in the region of thirty five per cent.

Joseph Ukel, South Sudan's Minister for Higher Education, Science & Technology in commenting on this situation said that finding sufficient places is only one of the challenges the universities face: the other major challenge is money. He also stated that the South Sudanese Government's proposed budget for 2011 does not include any money for the universities.

Of the *public* universities in South Sudan only five were operational when the feasibility study was undertaken, i.e.

- Juba University with a capacity of eighteen thousand
- Upper Nile University with an (approximate) capacity of three thousand
- Bahr El Ghazal University with a capacity of three thousand
- Rumbek University with a capacity of four hundred
- John Garang University with a capacity of two hundred

Three new Universities (Western Equatoria, Torit, and Northern Bahr El Ghazal, and Bantiu) are currently regarded as insufficiently equipped to admit students in the foreseeable future. In common with the operational universities they face challenges relating to shortage of academic and technical staff and the need for new/improved infrastructure, i.e. laboratories, lecture facilities, staff and student accommodation.

Funding of Public Universities - Following a conference held by GoSS's new Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in February 2011 to discuss the challenges faced by South Sudan's Universities, vice chancellors of eight public universities presented a signed memo containing recommendations to the president requesting provision of urgent funds for infrastructure development and increased financial support for the four newly

established universities as well as for the other public universities. However, at present Higher Education is not included in the list of the sixty important issues identified for planning by South Sudan 2011 Taskforce.

The overall current situation pertaining to South Sudan's universities is of major concern not only relative to the students involved, but also in the context of the country's need for development. Ideally – in addition to developing the potential of students – the country needs its universities to engage in the capacity and capability building of efficient leaders and managers with the ability to manage the country's economic and social development. Similarly, university faculties have the potential to provide consultancy services to both the public and private sectors - as well as engaging in social and scientific research and contributing to the country's knowledge economy.

Supply and Demand for University Places in South Sudan – Because the country is newly independent it was not possible for the feasibility study team to access officially validated statistics accurately forecasting the future need for university places. However, the indications are that approximately seventy thousand Sudanese pupils took examinations leading to university entrance in North and South Sudan, East Africa and elsewhere during 2011. On the assumption that thirty five thousand of these achieve the required qualifications, it is estimated that currently operational universities will be in a position to admit in the region of five thousand. Accordingly, about thirty thousand successful pupils will need to find university places outside Sudan. Whilst these figures are not officially validated, the indications are that there will be many thousands of Sudanese pupils with university entrance qualification who will not be able to find a university place in their own country.

In the absence of officially validated statistics the following circumstantial evidence was considered when concluding that South Sudan needs a new university:

- Students returning to South Sudan from northern universities
- Returnees to South Sudan who have missed-out on higher education
- South Sudanese who have missed-out on higher education because of the conflict
- Sudanese students studying abroad, principally because of insufficient university places in South Sudan
- The current and proposed 50% expansion of schooling provision in South Sudan
- 50% of South Sudan's current population being technically under school age
- The ability of a geographical dispersed university to contribute to the development of the areas in which individual faculties are located
- The long-term potential for individual ECS University faculties to become universities in their own right as part of a federated ECS University and thus contributing the higher education infrastructure of South Sudan
- The need to educate future leaders in a context which accords with Sudan's official Christian status.

What is a Christian World-view and what are its Benefits in a University Context? It is a model of education which seeks to transform and unite existing structures of knowledge - as opposed to constructing new ones. It has the potential to inform all areas of knowledge; transform attitudes to teaching and learning; does not create conflict between Christianity and other world-views; recognises that each discipline has its own foundational principles whilst intersecting with others. Accordingly, this transformational model has the capability to create a balance between thinking, reflection and creativity which can become formative personal

knowledge engendering the reinterpretation of experience in a Christian context; and also the possibility of establishing cohesion between a secular and a Christian world-view.

The Christian Distinctiveness of an ECS University - Reference to the Christian distinctiveness of an ECS University, does not imply religious elitism. What it implicitly implies in this context is a commitment to *service* in the name of the Christian faith. Ideally the university's religious distinctiveness should find practical expression throughout the whole life and work of the university by living-out a faith which has been unfolded in Scripture, lived-out through the Church and made-known in Christ. Such understanding would find authentic practical expression through a teaching and learning paradigm committed to the open search for truth and providing opportunity for students not only to study together but to be part of the Body of Christ. Such objectives would be achieved through the provision of education in which the academic, the human and the divine are indivisible: an holistic education designed to develop personal and professional integrity, skills for critical inquiry and independent judgment, in a Christian context.

A Christian Theology of Education - The purpose and rationale of an ECS University - as a Christian foundation - would be to reveal the nature and purpose of God throughout the whole of its life and work since a Christian perspective proposes that education is incomplete without theology's contribution. In practice this involves academic engagement between theology and education and its systematic application to the transmission and acquisition of beliefs, knowledge, values, attitudes and skills. Without such a uniting framework, an ECS University's Christian world-view would be in danger of being replaced by bland universalism and subject to secular evaluation.

Such a position can be validated since education and theology are both committed to giving attention *to matters of truth* as well as *the search for truth*. From a theological perspective there is no distinction to be drawn between the processes of *education* and *salvation*: theologically understood the two become one. This is not a question of theology prescribing that education should be about salvation but a recognition that a Christian theology of education is holistic and, therefore, about education in its fullest sense. Similarly, it communicates principles regarding love, justice, community, and equality, all of which are highly significant to education.

The Mission of an ECS University – In determining the overall missional purpose and incarnational rationale of an ECS University, UNESCO'S World Declaration on Higher Education (1998) helpfully identifies elements which provide a useful checklist regarding its overall mission when it states that a university should be

- equally accessible to all who have the qualifications/potential to benefit from a university education
- linked in a seamless educational system starting from childhood
- provide for lifelong learning,
- relevant to society
- provide diverse educational models
- provide for essential staff development
- ensure quality
- be student-centred
- ensure women's participation
- embrace the potential of Information Technology and networking

In an ECS University context, such expectations have a strong correlation with a biblical understanding of its missional purpose expressed in a commitment to love, justice and equality - underpinned by recognition that all are created in the image of God and uniquely gifted by him.

Core Values – A further major expression of the purpose and rationale for an ECS should be embodied in its core values which should ideally be embodied in all aspect of university life. Accordingly, university policies should ensure consistent implementation and monitoring of the following:

- **Professionalism** – In this context this involves the identification of ways in which *high quality teaching and learning* and the *well-being of the institution and its members* are to be procured through:
 - the recruitment, retention and professional development of staff
 - implementing processes for quality assuring and reviewing performance and curricula
 - implementing processes for upholding the moral and ethical integrity of the university in areas such as:
 - staff recruitment
 - staff welfare
 - student admission
 - the nature, quality and extent of student services - including chaplaincy and pastoral support.
- **Inclusiveness** – This involves determining the ways in which those of various faiths and none and from different social and financial backgrounds can be made welcome and prosper as equal members of a Christian foundation.
- **Integrity** – this requires institutional commitment to *transparency* and *accountability* and a commitment to *openness* and *forgiveness* so that the whole community feels the freedom to exercise its God-given creativity and imagination in the service of the university.
- **Equality** – in the context of a Christianly inspired institution, equality is based on the biblical understanding that *all are created in the image of God, uniquely gifted by Him and equal in His sight*. Therefore, there is the need to ensure - through institutional policy and practice - fairness, justice, respect and equality of opportunity and treatment, irrespective of religion, race, gender, social or financial status.

An ECS University Curriculum – Relative to its rationale and purpose an ECS University should offer a Christianly informed curriculum. This implies openness to examination of dominant ideas and human experience and also the network of truths within which all elements of knowledge find their locus in accordance with a Christian world-view. The unacceptable alternative would be to offer students an undifferentiated universalism which fails to present the possibility that there is *another way*. This does not imply indoctrination of students since it does not imply a Christianly exclusive view of education. On the contrary, it suggests that, since the Christian doctrine of creation claims this is God's world, a Christianly informed curriculum is *inclusive*. This is because it presupposes that everything in the universe is worthy of study from a Christian perspective. Arguably, therefore, a Christianly informed curriculum can intrinsically be connected with the unity and interdependence of all knowledge and, therefore, be offered with educational integrity to all students – not only those who are Christians.

A Christianly inspired curriculum proposes that *education needs meaning*, that it is incomplete without the inclusion of the religious and spiritual dimension, and that these aspects are fundamental to a proper understanding of the whole curriculum in a Christian context. The inescapable challenge in delivering a Christianly informed curriculum is that its credibility is ultimately dependent on the creative development of personal and collective understanding and on interpretation and action. Ultimately, the relevance of a Christianly inspired education is assessed according to its capacity to address issues of importance to students and assist them in relating them to contemporary society.

However, the ECS's rationale for establishing a university is not exclusively about its own missional purpose. It is also about contributing to the development and transformational change of South Sudan. Whilst this clearly accords with the ECS's aspiration to become more involved in the proclamation evangelism through social action, in practice such commitment will require major consideration of what an ECS University should teach in order to equip today's students for tomorrow's world. Reliable evidence indicates that for a university to be in the vanguard of developmental and transformational change in this way requires the delivery of a curriculum specifically focused on contributing to the reconstruction and development of the country, and a pedagogy which ensures balance between theory and practice.

Key Examples of current higher education institution identified by international aid agencies as having successfully contributed to their nation's development - These include The Technion in Israel, The Kigali Institute of Technology in Rwanda, and Hargeisa University of Development Studies in Ghana. For an ECS University to achieve this and also be faithful to its Christian foundation will require a cross-cutting curriculum in which a theological understanding informs all teaching and learning. Also, in the context of the need for students to be entrepreneurs in a country which currently has little prospect of employment, it will be essential for cross-cutting entrepreneurial studies to be included in the curriculum for all students.

University Admissions Policy – Part of an ECS University's purpose and rationale would be expressed in the inclusiveness of its admissions policy. Therefore, the Admissions Policy should clearly indicate that the university welcomes all students who wish to be educated in a Christian environment and context – irrespective of their faith stance, or none; and also its evident commitment to the potential support of under-privileged students.

International Dimension and University Partnerships - University feasibility study research participants identified the importance of an international dimension to an ECS University. Such a dimension enables universities not only to attract the most talented students and staff but also to open-up to new ideas and innovations. The international dimension of universities is increasingly important in determining the ranking of universities in world league tables. Current research evidence clearly shows that the world's best universities enrol large numbers of foreign students and employ foreign faculty in their search for the most talented, e.g. Harvard University, US, with 30 percent; Oxford 36 percent; Cambridge 33 percent.

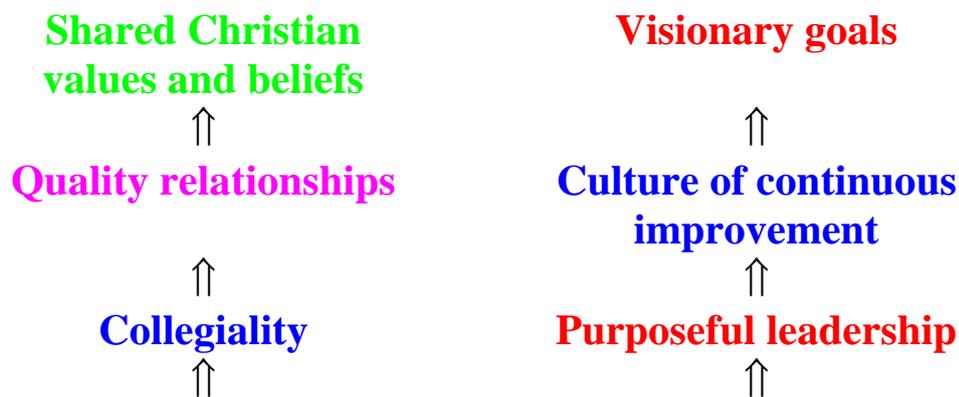
In accordance with this research - whilst an ECS University would clearly educate in a Sudanese context - it would clearly be advisable for the ECS to consider means of encouraging foreign students and staff and also the formation of international partnerships with other universities. Such inclusiveness is fundamental and clearly signified in the Latin

origin of the word *university*, i.e. *universitas*, meaning *whole*. Theologically understood, an international dimension to an ECS University would be a means of expressing biblical *hospitality to the stranger*. Therefore, ideally understood the ECS should seek ways of establishing the international dimension of the university from the outset.

As identified elsewhere in this report, as part of the Anglican Communion an ECS University would have the opportunity to network globally with universities which are also Christian foundations. Such organisations include the Colleges and Universities of the Anglican Communion (CUAC) and the Cathedrals Group of universities. Collaboration with such organisations could be mutually beneficial and lead to productive partnerships in shaping and developing an ECS University.

The following tables set-out the purpose and rationale of effective Christian universities.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PURPOSE AND RATIONALE OF EFFECTIVE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITIES



*** COMMON MISSION**
*** EMPHASIS ON LEARNING IN A UNIFYING CHRISTIAN FRAMEWORK**
*** A CHRISTIAN ETHOS CONDUCTIVE TO THE OPEN SEARCH FOR TRUTH**

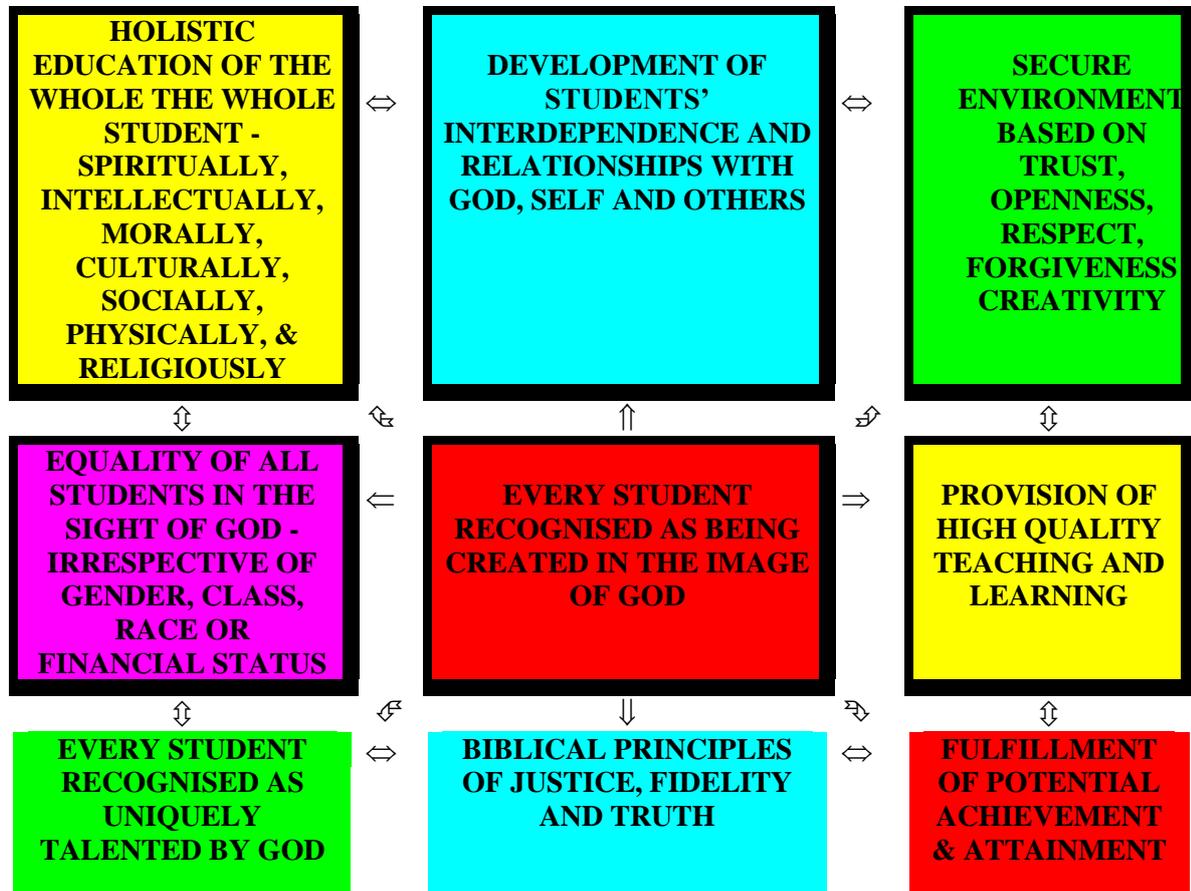
⇓
Quality physical environment

⇓
Focus on quality teaching and learning

⇓
High expectations

⇓
Affirmation and recognition

WHAT DISTINCTIVE BELIEFS INFORM UNIVERSITY EDUCATION?



**PRACTICAL EXPRESSION
OF THE C-O-N-N-E-C-T-I-O-N-S BETWEEN
FAITH
AND THE TECHNICALITIES OF UNIVERSITY LIFE**

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the context of this section of the report, and the information contained elsewhere, is recommended that the ECS should:

- produce a clearly defined policy statement regarding its vision and purpose for the proposed university; and also how core values, i.e. Christian values, principles and beliefs, which will underpin its life and work.
- construct a well-evidenced case identifying the *actual need* for a new university in South Sudan based on current supply and demand data relating to the shortage of university places in the country; and also the GoSS's current lack of funding to meet the need for more places
- identify the unique contribution which a university with a Christian foundation could potentially make to the future of South Sudan and the ways in which the ECS proposes the university should contribute to the recovery and future development of the country
- analyse the potential of Gwynne College and the other ECS theological colleges to attain the standards required for recognition as faculties in the proposed geographically dispersed university: then *identify* and *timetable* the steps to be taken in facilitating them to reach the required standards. This analysis should be costed for purpose of grant applications and determining the viability of the proposal.
- Identify how the content of an ECS University's curriculum would contribute to the reconstruction and development of South Sudan. It is advised that the ECS should take cognisance of the programmes/curricula offered by the key institutions identified above which are successfully contributing to their country's recovery and development.