



COVENANT BETWEEN
ECKERD COLLEGE AND THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)

2011-2015



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PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

The 350 years of history of colleges and universities in America have been characterized from the beginning by a unique national enthusiasm by Christian denominations to establish colleges that will seek and proclaim the dual truths of faith and science. This particularly American phenomenon is probably a result of our history as a nation embracing many denominations and religious faiths, rather than limited to one as the countries of Old Europe were. The denominational connection of colleges to their ecclesiastical progenitors has been variously interpreted and maintained from the beginning, and Eckerd College differs from its sister liberal arts institutions in this process only by its relative youth. Nearly all of our peer institutions are at least a century, and often nearly two centuries older than Eckerd College.

A second and consequential difference is that Eckerd College has been shaped as a college in a time of unprecedented religious tolerance and an increasing recognition – painfully gained – of how powerful a force religion plays in the geo-political relations among nations. It is, therefore, no surprise, in this environment with the openness and flexibility youth provides, Eckerd College has developed an institutional culture of openness to all dimensions of spiritual life and a set of programs that explore the full range of religious experience.

The history of the Presbyterian Church has been characterized from its beginning by a commitment to education. Both John Calvin and John Knox were passionate advocates of learning

and education, and the history of American higher education reflects the imagination and emphatic involvement of the Presbyterian Church in establishing and nurturing colleges and universities. Therefore, while Eckerd College embraces its institutional culture of enhancing the full variety of religious experience, it proudly affirms its natal connection and Covenant with the Presbyterian Church (USA). The College also recognizes the utility of updating, from time to time, that connection and the specific activities encompassed by the Covenant.

In its efforts to educate students toward intellectual, physical and spiritual wholeness, Eckerd College has declared five core values that inform our approach toward all aspects of curricular and co-curricular programming. These values, affirmed in the principal documents of the Reformed and Presbyterian faith, attest to the College's commitment to provide a thoughtful and compassionate witness to the Christian faith while honoring the diversity of theological and spiritual traditions in the student and global community.

The five core values, interpreted through the words and ideas of Christian scripture are:

RESIDENTIAL:

. . . seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you . . . , and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. Jeremiah 29:7

We take seriously the need for students to “seek the welfare” of the place where they have been sent, to create new names for community, to include and be included. Reflected in the residential experience that encourages both individuality and connectedness is an understanding of the relationship between the individual and the community that has characterized God's people since the calling of Abraham.

SPIRITUAL:

God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. John 4:24

The spirit is manifested at Eckerd College through personal and corporate study and worship, through service, as well as through academic examination of matters that are called “truth.” We encourage students to pursue wisdom outside of themselves, to ask questions of “Why?” and “How?” and to be open for unexpected answers. The College staff includes professional clergy to assist, direct, and encourage in those pursuits.

ENVIRONMENTAL:

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth... Genesis 1:1

Reformed understanding connects salvation with “*hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God*” (Romans 8:21). Redemption is not reserved for humankind. “. . . *in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself.*” And then God left the message of that reconciliation to us (2 Corinthians 5:19–20). Environmental Studies is one of Eckerd’s most popular majors; all students are required to take an environmental perspective class; the senior capstone class gives an opportunity for students to reflect on their relationship with the fullness of God’s creation; multiple environmental service trips are offered every year; “green” programs enhance residence life, food services, and maintenance. Each of these suggests the seriousness of Eckerd’s ethos of eco-justice.

GLOBAL:

I will make you as a light to the nation, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

Isaiah 49:6

God's blessing of salvation to the nations is part of an earlier covenant, God's covenant with Abraham. But just as Abraham's house was to be a blessing to all the families of the earth, Eckerd's "house" – the faculty, staff and students past, present and future – recognizes a call to be a blessing to the nations. Through a top-ranked international education program, through opportunities in service learning, through individual travels recognized both academically and co-curricular, Eckerd students learn and teach, touch lives and have their lives touched, bless and are blessed by God's children throughout the world.

PERSONAL:

God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am!" Exodus 3:4

God spoke to Moses in a burning bush, got through to Jonah when he was stuck in the belly of a whale, cracked King David's arrogance through a simple parable, delivered the word face to face to the woman at the well. Each needed a personal, unique encounter with the Divine to be readied for transformation. This is the concept of Eckerd's "personal" characteristic. Education is a dialogue, "a constant and dynamic interaction" between teacher and learner. We are committed to recognizing the individuality of each student, to equip students to "find out for themselves" in matters of academics and of faith.

PART TWO: THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ECKERD COLLEGE

In thought and word and deed, we commit ourselves to excellence in teaching and in modeling these values. We invite the Presbyterian Church (USA) in all its aspects to covenant with us to prepare students to take their place in the Reign of God, which is on earth as it is in heaven.

For the term March 2011 to March 2015, Eckerd College in covenant with the Presbyterian Church (USA):

1. Seeks opportunities, in the classroom and in our co-curricular programs, to learn about, discuss and proclaim the spiritual and educational traditions and legacy of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Reformed Tradition and to develop and explore models of spirituality and service that provide a viable future for the Church in the 21st Century.
2. Will continue to support its Spiritual Life Lecture Series, which brings to campus outstanding voices of contemporary religion and spiritual practice for audiences that include the College, local church congregations and other members of the local community.
3. Having initiated a cooperative agreement by which Pittsburgh Theological Seminary will offer its Doctorate of Ministry on the Eckerd College campus, we will look for other ways to cooperate on additional educational programs, formal and informal.
4. Supports one of the strongest service-learning programs in the country, last year providing 77,000 hours of student volunteer support for the non-profit sector of Tampa Bay and offering service-learning study abroad programs during Winter Term and Spring Break.

5. Continues its commitment to “Western Heritage in the Global Context,” its fundamental building block course for all freshmen focusing on the values of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and to “Quest for Meaning,” its capstone course for all seniors, focusing on exploring ways to live the values of the examined life and the educated spiritual imagination.
6. Provides scholarships to young Presbyterians to study at Eckerd College.
7. Expands the benefit plan options for ordained Presbyterian ministers working full time in Campus Ministries to include participation in the Presbyterian Board of Pensions.
8. Commits to being actively engaged in the work and mission of the Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities as well as cultivating relationships with sister colleges that seek innovative and creative ways to engage pedagogical methods.
9. Continues to nurture and expand global partnerships with Presbyterians around the world through the International Education program.
10. Pledges to underwrite, for the term of this agreement, opportunities for Eckerd College, as well as sister colleges, to participate in special events in order to engage in valuable discussions related to the commitment of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Reformed Tradition to higher education and lifelong learning among people from all walks of life.
11. And commits to using its Spiritual Life Council to seek fruitful ways to partner with Presbyterian congregations across Florida.

PART THREE: THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHURCH

(The Synod of the South Atlantic, the Six
Presbyteries of Florida and their Congregations)

In thought and word and deed, we commit ourselves to partner with Eckerd College in its mission to educate students toward intellectual, physical and spiritual wholeness. We, the Synod of the South Atlantic, along with the Presbyteries of Florida and all of its members, covenant with Eckerd College to prepare students to take their place in the Reign of God, which is on earth as it is in heaven.

*From the term March 2011 to March 2015, the
Synod of South Atlantic in covenant with Eckerd College:*

1. Will pray for the students, faculty and staff of the College in order that all on campus might find intellectual, physical and spiritual wholeness.
2. Will partner with the College in using the beautiful College campus for events that will benefit Presbyterians around Florida and also expose Eckerd College to prospective students and their families. These events may include middle and high school church conferences and Presbyterian Women (PW) regional gatherings.
3. Will partner with the College to provide middle and high school students the opportunity to participate in the Eckerd College service-learning programs allowing prospective students to learn more about Eckerd College while helping build a better Tampa Bay and wider Florida community.

4. Will encourage all congregations and Presbyterians within the Synod of South Atlantic to add a website link to Eckerd College and find other ways to communicate the presence of Eckerd College to Presbyterians within the Synod.
5. Will encourage all congregations to celebrate an Eckerd College Sunday in their worship services.
6. Will partner with Eckerd College in finding ways to nurture transformation in the lives of young adults, remembering that Eckerd College is one of only 40 schools profiled in Loren Pope's trusted *Colleges That Change Lives*.
7. Will create networks of Presbyterians and other interested persons who will gather for conversations, conferences and other events in order to nurture renewal in our Presbyterian congregations, and the church universal, as we examine and confront the challenges and opportunities in the church in the 21st Century.
8. Will approach Eckerd College as a locus not just for the church teaching but for the church learning. Additionally, the church will draw from the deep intellectual resources of Eckerd College as a way to inform its encounter with the contemporary world, committing itself to engagement in a continued conversation with a complex, global, and pluralistic community.

9. Will support and promote Eckerd College through interpreting its mission to the larger church by acquainting church members with the programs offered by the College, including the Center for Spiritual Life, by encouraging young people to consider Eckerd College for their college careers, by representing the needs of the College including advancement plans and campaigns to the Presbytery, by proposing names of people to the Board of Trustees to serve the College on its Board of Trustees and other committees and councils, and by fulfilling this covenant in other ways that bring honor and glory to God!

Signed in witness on this date, March 7, 2011, by

Donald R. Eastman III, President
Eckerd College

Reginald V. Parsons
Synod Executive/Stated Clerk
Synod of the South Atlantic,
Presbyterian Church (USA)



ABOUT ECKERD COLLEGE

Located on 188 acres of waterfront property in St. Petersburg, Florida, Eckerd College is a private, coeducational college of liberal arts and sciences related by covenant to the Presbyterian Church (USA). Founded in 1958, Eckerd is a pioneer of responsible innovation – developing programs that have been adopted nationwide and earning the college an international reputation for academic excellence.

Eckerd College has a diverse student body with 1,800 students from 48 states and 32 countries and is one of only 40 schools listed in Loren Pope's *Colleges That Change Lives*. In 2003, Eckerd was named one of 13 *Institutions of Excellence in the First College Year* by the Policy Center on the First Year of College and became one of the youngest colleges to receive a Phi Beta Kappa chapter. Eckerd also serves over 1,000 students annually through its Program for Experienced Learners. The Leadership Development Institute executive education program, Academy of Senior Professionals at Eckerd College (ASPEC), and offerings through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute and Road Scholar identify the college as a national leader in continuing education.



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