

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND THE  
CHRISTIAN COLLEGE MISSION:  
PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNERS IN  
ADULT DEGREE-COMPLETION  
PROGRAMS

By

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Changing Times

The generation born between 1946 through 1964, known as the baby boomers, has caused a "demographic disruption" to society from the time of their birth to current day. The baby boomers account for 31% of the total United States population. There are approximately 77,000,000 members of this generation radically impacting every aspect of society (Cork & Lightstone, 1998, pp. 10-11). The generations that came just before and after the baby boomers are relatively small in comparison; therefore, it is the vast size of the baby boomer generation along with their unique characteristics that have dramatically influenced society and markets (Cork & Lightstone, 1998, pp. 43-45). Maternity wards were bursting with new babies and elementary schools were being built at an amazing rate in the 1950s to accommodate the needs of this dominant post World War II cohort (pp. 43-45).

Many of society's institutions responded to the needs of this cohort out of necessity to accommodate the demand presented by the developmental stages of this generation. When the baby boomers were being born, hospital nurseries had to expand to accommodate the number of babies being born. Gerber baby food sales doubled between 1948 and 1950.

Gerber baby food sales kept rising for the next 15 years, and when the boom was over, Gerber Baby Food Company was forced to diversify. The school system, including elementary, junior high, and high schools, was under great stress during the period from the 1950s to 1970s as it attempted to accommodate the educational needs of the baby boomers through building programs and the hiring of teachers to meet the demands. By the 1970s and 1980s, the baby boomers were influencing the economy with their more grown-up wants and needs. This huge cohort turned to banks to finance their purchases, placing pressure like never before on money. They hit money markets hard and forced interest rates to soar (Cork & Lightstone, 1998, pp. 63-65).

When the baby boom cohort began to reach the age of the traditional college-age student, 18 to 21 years of age, the higher educational institutions were no longer exempt from the influence of the baby boomer generation. Just as they placed pressure on the elementary school systems in the 1950s, they began placing the same pressure on university systems as early as the 1960s. They changed the landscape of higher education by simply coming of age (Cork & Lightstone, 1998, p. 44).

#### Southern Nazarene University

Southern Nazarene University (SNU) is a senior-level, co-educational, liberal-arts university with selected professional and graduate degree programs. As a part of the International Church of the Nazarene, SNU serves the South

Central Educational Region of the church, which has 634 churches located in the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas. The main campus is located in Bethany, Oklahoma, a western suburb of Oklahoma City, on a 44-acre site (SNU Self-Study Report, 1999-2000, p. 1).

A merger of Texas Holiness University founded in Texas in 1899 with five other Christian colleges and universities from the states of Arkansas, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas between 1920 and 1940 created Southern Nazarene University. The North Central Association of Colleges and Schools first accredited SNU in 1955-56 under the name of Bethany-Peniel College. That accreditation continues to this day (SNU Self-Study Report, 1999-2000 p. 1).

Learners who attend SNU come in contact with a Christian educational institution with a Wesleyan-holiness theological tradition. This tradition lends itself to a unique vision of life and thought. One emphasis that differentiates the Wesleyan-holiness theological tradition from most other Christian traditions is the concept referred to as entire sanctification. Nazarenes believe that God calls Christians to a life of holy living that is marked by an act of God, cleansing the heart from original sin and filling the individual with love for God and humankind. This experience is marked by a dedicated choice of the believer to do God's will and is followed by a life of seeking to serve God through service to others. Like

salvation, entire sanctification is an act of God's grace and is not of works (<http://www.nazarene.org/gensec/who.html>).

The educational experience at Southern Nazarene University (SNU) is higher education with a difference. That difference is clearly indicated by association. As denoted in the university's name, it is a part of the International Church of the Nazarene. "Historically, Nazarene global ministry has centered around evangelism, compassionate ministry, and education" (Church of the Nazarene Manual, 1997-2003, p. 23). It is also a member of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) which is accredited and approved by many state and national organizations including the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (SNU Self-Study Report, 1999-2000, p. 1). In the United States, only 100 Christ-centered institutions have qualified for membership in the CCCU (<http://www.cccu.org>). Association with CCCU provides an indication as to the university's difference. However, the accentuation of that difference is seen through the manifestation of the Adult Studies degree-completion programs.

#### Adult Studies

The conclusion of the long postwar baby boom in the early 1960s had far-reaching consequences in the early 1980s for colleges and universities. The exhausted ranks of newborns in the early 1960s depleted the number of

traditional, college-age students from classrooms across the nation in the early 1980s. In the 1980s, the last of the traditional college-age baby boomers had enrolled in traditional educational degree-programs at institutions of higher education. The smaller size of the next generation could not replace the sheer numbers of the baby boomers with new traditional college enrollees. The prediction of this occurrence occurred in the 1970s with looming consequences foreshadowed for higher educational institutions (<http://www.lib.niu.edu/ipo/ii780215.html>). The far-reaching implications threatened the entire higher education marketplace (<http://www.eric.org/digests/ED333854.html>). Indeed, the reality of declining enrollments was impacting private non-profit Christian liberal arts higher educational institutions as well.

Southern Nazarene University (SNU) was one of the institutions that felt this ominous impact. In the early 1980's, SNU began facing a serious declining enrollment trend due to changing American demographics. SNU administrators and the Board of Trustees (Board) committed to the serious study of a "new curricula that would be directed toward working adults" (Gresham & Gresham, 1998, p. 128). In addition to deterring a future financial crisis, this action had the potential to provide SNU with "financial solidity, but there were serious misgivings as to its effects on the college's image and in relation to the historic holiness mission and standards" (p. 129). Despite

this obvious tension, in 1986 the creation and offering of an undergraduate degree-completion option known as Management of Human Resources came into existence. This program, designed specifically for working adults, utilized adult education principles. It was the first adult degree-completion program in External Programs, known later as the SNU School of Adult Studies. External Programs existed from 1985 through the early 1990s and served as the foundation for the SNU School of Adult Studies.

The SNU administration and board's decision has proven to be a pivotal one for the university, which yielded immediate results. In a short period of time, "the trend of declining enrollments at the college was slowed and the financial consequences of declining enrollments were halted or cushioned as older students were attracted in increasing numbers" (Gresham & Gresham, 1998, p. 129). Upon reflection, it has proven to be a crucial decision for the university. In 1988, the university requested a focused North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) visit to review the newly implemented Management of Human Resources (MHR) program, which was an academic major and which designed for working adults within the SNU Department of External Programs. NCA is an accrediting organization committed to developing and maintaining high standards of excellence for educational institutions (<http://www.ncacihe.org>). The MHR major was found to be "quite

successful and in harmony with the university mission'' by the visiting NCA team (SNU Self-Study Report 1999-2000, p. 2). Thus, the first major in the SNU School of Adult Studies gained approval by North Central in 1988 and identified as being consistent with the SNU mission.

Since the initial enrollment of 12 students, the enrollment in the SNU School of Adult Studies has continued to climb. Presently 517 undergraduate students are enrolled in 4 different degree-completion bachelor's programs and 1 general education course delivery system. There are 386 graduate students enrolled in 6 different master's programs (SNU Weekly Census Report, September 12, 2003).

In addition to a growing enrollment, the SNU School of Adult Studies has also expanded its programs. The bachelor's degree-completion programs currently offered through Adult Studies include Family Studies and Gerontology, Network Management, Nursing, and Organizational Leadership. Several graduate degrees are offered including the Master of Arts in Marital and Family Therapy; Master of Arts in Educational Leadership; Master of Arts in Theology; Master in Business Administration; Master of Science, Management; and a Master of Science in Counseling Psychology. Two academic service areas administered through the School of Adult Studies are Alternative and Prior Learning (APL) and Bridge. The adult degree-completion programs are efficient in the ability to provide a quality



education in a compressed modularized delivery system (SNU Self-Study Report 1999-2000, p. 2).

In addition to the programs on SNU's main campus near Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the University opened the Tulsa Center in 1991 in Oklahoma's second largest metropolitan area. The Tulsa Center offers bachelor's degrees in Organizational Leadership, Family Studies and Gerontology, and Registered Nurse. The Tulsa Center also offers graduate degrees in Master of Business Administration; Master of Science, Management; and Master of Arts in Educational Leadership. Currently there are 225 students enrolled at the Tulsa Center (SNU Weekly Census Reports, September 12, 2003).

Thus, the SNU School of Adult Studies has a successful program history with a solid student enrollment which has contributed significantly to the sound fiscal position of the university. The decade of the 1990s resulted in the "most stable fiscal position of its first one hundred years of operation" (SNU Self-Study Report 1999-2000, p. 61). Partly as a result of the success of the School of Adult Studies, "Southern Nazarene University has the human, physical, and financial resources needed to carry out its mission now and in the future" (p. 76).

#### SNU Mission Statement

Mission statements traditionally communicate the goals, objectives, and activities of an organization. It addresses: what function(s) the organization performs, for

whom the organization performs the function(s), how the organization goes about fulfilling the function(s), and finally, why the organization exists (Goodstein, Nolan, & Preiffer, 1993, pp. 170-171). Educational institutions frequently use such statements to provide an awareness of tradition and vision to their faculty, administration, staff, and learners and to the communities in which they serve. The mission of Southern Nazarene University is to educate:

Students for responsible Christian living within the contexts of the liberal arts, selected professional and graduate studies, a Wesleyan-holiness theological perspective, and a cross-cultural community life. Through its primary relationship to the Church of the Nazarene in the South Central Region of the USA, the university is the church at work in higher education integrating faith, learning, and life. (SNU Undergraduate Catalog, 2003-2005, p. 6)

Mission statements frequently provide only the broadest description of institutional goals. Consequently, more specific characterizations are often needed to understand the university's priorities. For this reason, the mission statement is accompanied by purposes that explain and illuminate the institution's key undertakings (SNU Self-Study Report, 1999-2000, p. 35).

The SNU mission statement guides faculty, administration, staff, and learners in seeking to transform society and focuses efforts on the following six purpose statements:

- Inviting the university community to live as followers of Christ and to

- encounter the Wesleyan vision of Christian life and thought;
- Establishing and maintaining undergraduate programs that equip students to be life-long learners and assist them in personal and professional preparation;
  - Providing educational excellence for students who represent a wide range of academic ability, life experience, and socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds;
  - Encouraging development of the whole person by engaging students in responsible participation and leadership in co-curricular programs;
  - Promoting student learning through both cross-cultural educational and service opportunities, and
  - Achieving and sustaining a level of institutional stewardship adequate to support and enhance the mission of the university. (SNU Undergraduate Catalog, 2003-2005, p. 6)

The current SNU mission statement and six purpose statements were developed during the summer of 1998 and were approved by the general faculty on August 20, 1998, and the Board of Trustees on October 2, 1998. The Mission and Purposes Task Force, which was responsible for the mission revision process, consisted of the Leadership Team along with Trustee and student representation. Input was sought and provided from the Department Chairs' Council representing the traditional programs, the Program Directors' Council representing the non-traditional programs, the Graduate Council, the Academic Council, and the faculty at large. During the mission review process, at each revision, various groups attended to accuracy of content, inadvertent omissions, and clarity of

interpretation (SNU Self-Study Report, 1999-2000, p. 37). The aim of this entire endeavor was at preserving SNU's focus of being a Christian college with a Wesleyan- holiness tradition.

SNU faculty, administrators, and staff engage with the learners in the context of a Christian mission influenced by the Wesleyan Holiness tradition. Instructors incorporate adult learning instructional strategies in the context of this tradition. Thus, the learner who participates in an adult degree-completion program at SNU encounters foundational adult learning principles and concepts in the context of a Christian mission influenced by this tradition.

#### Adult Learning

Adult learning concepts are foundational to the success of adult degree-completion programs. In every way there is an attempt to meet the needs and desires of the adult learner. Adult degree-completion programs provide education in such a way that makes education convenient and accessible in delivery models that work for adults. This type of learning is grounded in the adult learning concepts of (a) andragogy, (b) real-life learning, (c) self-directed learning, and (d) transformational learning theory. These concepts are all vital to understanding the adult educational experience at Southern Nazarene University.

## Andragogy

Malcolm Knowles altered the way that adults experience education with the introduction and advancement of the concept of andragogy. Andragogy is a learner-centered approach to teaching adults that is based on a set of assumptions to be used when determining the appropriateness of strategies to assist adult learning (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). The total educational experience for adults is by design built around andragogical assumptions in an adult degree-completion program. By its very nature, the andragogical model used in the adult degree-completion program involves process and can be described as a "process model, in contrast to the content models employed by most traditional educators" (Knowles, 1984, p. 117) in traditional higher education classrooms. In the adult degree-completion program classroom, the adult learner's real-life learning is an integral part of the learner's educational experience and process. This is evident in the expectations associated with most group processes in the classroom.

## Real-Life Learning

Real-life learning is an essential component of the adult educational process for the adult learner. Real-life learning may be viewed as "a matter of the adult's having (or acquiring) the knowledge and skill essential to function effectively in the various learning situations in which he finds himself" (Smith, 1976, p. 5). Real-life learning

transcends the formal classroom and appreciates learning from all facets of the learner's life. Real-life learning can act as a springboard for discussion and theoretical application in the classroom learning process.

Adult education ``has witnessed a growing emphasis on learning in real-life settings'' (Fellenz & Conti, 1989, p. 23). Adult learners desire an educational experience that relates to their lives and where they feel that they are understood in the context of their world. Real-life learning requires an understanding of ``the learner's background, language, and culture as well as social factors such as poverty and discrimination'' (p. 25).

The concept of learning-how-to-learn is directly related to appreciating how adults operate and how they become more effective in any given learning situation. The application of real-life learning is numerous in the adult educational experience. It is seen through group processes, through diverse contribution of real-life examples to illustrate applications of theoretical concepts being studied, through problem-solving assignments, and through the completed life portfolio. The life portfolio reflects the myriad of ways that the adult learner has been involved in self-directed learning.

#### Self-Directed Learning

Woven throughout this exploration of real-life learning is the golden thread of self-directed learning. Self-directed learning is learning in which the adult learner

takes the initiative in learning, identifies the specific learning needs, formulates goals for learning, determines the resources needed, chooses appropriate learning strategies, and evaluates the learning outcomes as it pertains to real-life (Knowles, 1975, p. 18). The Adult Studies instructor, as facilitator, works to direct the class learning objectives and participants' learning objectives toward meaningful life applications by providing opportunities for learners to critically reflect upon concepts studied in the context of the learners' past, present, and future life applications. There is always the intent through discussion and written assignments for the individual learner to generate meaning through critical analysis, synthesis, and application of concepts studied. It is through this critical reflective process that opportunities for transformational learning occur in the SNU adult degree-completion programs.

#### Transformational Learning

Transformation learning theory endeavors to analyze and expound on the process by which adult learners make meaning of their experience. Transformative learning is the process of effecting change within a particular frame of reference (Mezirow, 1991, p. xiii). For adult learners "taking an action is an integral dimension of transformative learning" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 161).

Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation (1991) offers a view of learning that suggests learning is a change in perspective leading to action. The process of transformation is one of transforming "the structures of meaning" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 44). It is learning "that leads to some type of fundamental change in the learners' sense of themselves, their worldviews, their understanding of their pasts, and their orientation to the future" (Hayes & Flannery, 2000, p. 140).

Adults understand their experiences by way of interpreting information through several life filters including educational, religious, and socialization processes. Prior learning from each of these filters tends to influence the learner's response. "It is not so much what happens to people but how they interpret and explain what happens to them that determines their actions, their hopes, their contentment, and emotional well-being and their performance" (Mezirow, 1991, p. xiii).

Critical reflection is a significant part of the integrative educational process for Southern Nazarene University adult learners willing to engage in the in-depth self-evaluative learning opportunities provided. One assignment required for all learners to complete in the adult degree-completion programs is the life portfolio. This requires learners to articulate and reflect upon their



personal life story and learning through context of studying adult learning. The very nature of this completed assignment can be personally transformative for some adult learners. Often, life issues and situations from the past and present are understood more clearly through this study and future life direction can be declared with better understanding.

#### Problem Statement

There are growing numbers of Christian colleges and universities that are attempting to meet the distinctive needs of the adult learner. The rewards are significant for the learner and the educational institution alike. The adult learner reaps the benefit of an education that is specifically designed with the adult learner in mind. Successful adult degree-completion programs at Christian colleges and universities result in increased enrollment, which positively affects the financial position of tuition-based educational institutions.

Yet, by implementing programs that are driven by the market and student needs, there is mounting concern that Christian colleges and universities may be compromising their tradition's vision and ethos and that their tradition's heritage is being increasingly marginalized (Benne, 2001, p. 6). Voiced concern often lingers that decisions to create adult degree-completion programs are to save a college or university from financial ruin and that it

has been done at the expense of the central educational mission of the Christian college and university.

When a college or university is in a fight for its life or even for its relatively good "market position," it responds to what the market demands and then tries to squeeze in its own specific contributions that may transcend those demands. It is a difficult balancing act. But if it accedes too easily to the former, it loses what made it distinctive in the first place--its soul. (Benne, 2001, p. 4)

It has been implied that adult degree-completion programs compromise the educational mission of the institution in an attempt to cater to the adult learner in order to make the program more marketable (<http://www.resourcingchristianity.org>).

Much has been written on university missions and traditional-aged students (e.g., Gasset et al., 2001; Poorman, 1997). However, there has been no research regarding the impact of educational mission upon the educational experience of the adult learner in adult degree-completion programs in Christian colleges and universities. Currently, Christian liberal arts colleges and universities have been implementing non-traditional adult education programs. In adult degree-completion programs, the andragogical model of learning is embraced, critical reflection is expected, self-directed learning is encouraged, real-life learning is appreciated, and transformative learning is celebrated. Accrediting agencies have acknowledged that SNU is providing a quality education, successfully applying adult educational principles and

meeting the spirit of the educational mission. Yet, the question remains and the suspicion still lingers in regards to whether or not the university mission is being fulfilled through educational experiences completed through adult degree-completion programs like the ones at SNU.

#### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions of adult learners who are participating in degree-completion programs at Southern Nazarene University of their educational experience as it relates to the mission of the university. The focus was on describing the influences, factors, and qualities of the educational experience perceived by the student, and this was related to the university mission. Emphasis was given to andragogy, real life learning, self-directed learning, and transformational learning.

#### Research Questions

1. What do adult learners consider to be the university mission in the educational experience?
2. How do adult learners encounter university mission through the educational experience?
3. What are the perceptions of the adult learner regarding the importance of the university mission to the educational experience?
4. How important is the university mission to learning?

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected for this study. The qualitative data was collected through focus groups and one-to-one individual interviews with the

utilization of open-ended questions. The interviews were tape-recorded. The transfer of interview content was to a word-processing computer program and analyzed according to emerging themes. Quantitative data consisted of demographic information collected on each participant and used to provide a profile of the participants.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### The Wesleyan Holiness Tradition

In the spiritual awakening of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Britain, known as the Methodist Revival, John Wesley was the leader (McGonigle, 2003, p. 15). Wesley became the leader of this spiritual movement while at Oxford University, with his brother Charles, whose members were called the Holy Club or what is now known as the Methodist (p. 15). The word Methodist was a way of making fun at their "methodical approach to faith" (p. 15). In the 1760's, "his converts and followers retained the name Methodists and the movement spread from Britain to America" (p. 15). Wesley's theology, referred to as Wesleyanism, contains a broad and interconnected range of doctrines including what Wesley believed about humankind, God, salvation, and sanctification (p. 14). It also encompasses Wesley's "vision of the Spirit-led life into disciplines of community, service, and devotion" (Tracy, 2003, p. 18).

In Wesley's writings, "the love of God is the most prominent" of all of the doctrines (McGonigle, 2003, p. 15). He proclaimed "God's universal love" for 50 years (p.

15). The foundation of his ministry he taught was that all men and women could be saved "because God loves them and Christ died for them" (p. 15). He also emphasized the doctrine of salvation by faith. Wesley emphasized the position that "salvation by faith is the Christian gospel" (p.15). All persons can be saved from their "sins through faith in Christ" (p. 15). "Only God's grace can save us, but God does not force that grace upon us" (p. 15). Salvation by faith is never forced, but treats people as "responsible men and women" with the ability to choose (p. 15).

Wesley's theology also included the "doctrine of the witness of the Spirit" (McGonigle, 2003, p. 16). This encompasses the "inner assurance in our own hearts that God has forgiven our sin, adopted us into His family, and given us eternal life" (p. 16). It also includes the "outer witness, the evidence of a life transformed by God's grace" (p. 16). Especially emphasized in Wesley's theology is the "doctrine of entire sanctification" (p. 16).

Sanctification is an actual process in which God is "doing something in us" (p. 16). Wesley taught that human beings "grow in God's grace from the moment we are saved and that this growth is what Scriptures call sanctification" (p. 16). It is through the "grace of sanctification we grow in

love for God and our neighbor, and the power of sin is daily weakened in our hearts" (p. 16).

The Wesleyan vision of the Spiritual life is a "Spirit to spirit relationship" (Tracy, 2003, p. 19). The "spirit is the part of you that is most distinctly and uniquely kin to God" (p. 19). The Spirit-led life requires that the individual "surrender the very core of your being to God" (p.19). Gradually, in the Spirit-led life of the individual "the life that emerges belongs to God more than to the self" (p. 19). The individual's "personal purposes fade" and the purposes of God increase in the life of the individual (p .19). The individual is then "led deeper into the disciplines of community, service, and devotion" (p. 19). Through the Wesleyan-holiness tradition, personal devotion to God is incomplete without the elements of community and service.

Spirituality in the Wesleyan tradition is "grounded in community" (Tracy, 2003, p. 19). In Christian worship, community begins but it continues in "face-to-face groups that foster spiritual growth" (p. 19). For the purposes of community, Wesley created "societies, classes, and bands" (p. 19). Societies were similar to local churches, classes were small groups of approximately a dozen persons meeting weekly for inspiration and instruction, and bands consisted

of five or six same gender persons who met as a covenant group to share their spiritual journeys. One-on-one relationships also promoted were the "faith-mentoring pairs and 'twin souls'" (p. 19). John Wesley "discovered what Italian author Luciano de Crescenzo knew: 'We are, each of us, angels with only one wing, and we can only fly embracing each other'" (p. 19). One of the treasures of the Wesleyan heritage is the concept of the "spiritual friend, faith mentor, or small group to watch over you in love" (p. 19).

Wesley's emphasis on adult education within the context of community in Britain through the church coincides with the approximate time period when Benjamin Franklin began Junto in 1727 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Knowles, 1977, p. 10). The Junto, a "uniquely adult educational institution founded in this period" as a discussion club, which later became known as the American Philosophical Society (p. 10). Interestingly, the church "was probably the most influential institutional force for the education of adults in the first two centuries our national life" (p. 9). The "single most universal instrument for intellectual activity" at that time was the church (p. 8).



The Wesleyan revolution in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was fueled through the tradition of service (Tracy, 2003, pp. 19-20). The concept of service is a hallmark of the Wesleyan tradition. Early Wesleyan ancestors in the ministries of mercy included a "free medical clinic, schools and more schools, prison ministries, food and clothing distribution, an orphanage, the Poor House, the Widow's Home, and a hospital for unwed and destitute mothers-to-be who received prenatal care, postnatal care, religious instruction, and vocational training" (p. 20). They also instituted an "unemployment plan and even a small business loan fund" (p. 20). It is through the life of the individual through the discipline of service that others encounter the love of Christ. Service is one way as Christian human beings that we can encircle our arms around others as an extension of the love of Christ.

#### Holiness Movement

Change is not new to the American culture. In particular, historically the American culture has experienced great changes demographically, socially, and educationally, but it has also experienced religious revivals (Smith, 1962, pp. 11-26). Prior to the start of the Civil War, a great holiness revival swept through the country in 1858.

Hundreds of mammoth daily prayer meetings broke out almost spontaneously in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and nearly every city and town in the northern states. Ministers and laymen of all denominations took part. Churches everywhere scheduled special services. . . . The deepening of moral conviction hardened resistance against the sin of slavery. . .and rejuvenated as well the crusades against intemperance, Sabbath desecration, and neglect of the poor. It also inspired hundreds of Christians to seek holiness of heart and life. (p. 11)

People within the movement included Methodists, Wesleyans, Free Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Quakers. This holiness revival movement gained momentum after the Civil War and continued nearly to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (p. 15).

The holiness movement took a form of renewal or reform movement within the churches. Just as the modern professionals optimistically believed that they held the solution to the ills of society, so, too, did the leaders of the revival movement believe that "the gospel of Christian perfection was the key to a century of spiritual progress" (Smith, 1962, p. 12). They were deeply anxious about the moral condition of the nation and equally committed to reforming American society. While the mainline churches responded to social problems with a secularized Social Gospel, holiness people were convinced

that the transforming power of the Holy Spirit offered the only hope of true reform (Smith, 1962, p. 15).

In the years following the Civil War, holiness people channeled their energies through independent holiness associations such as the National Camp Meeting Association and the National Holiness Association (Smith, 1962, pp. 33-35). This was due, in part, to the lukewarm response of major denominational churches to embrace the movement. Camp meetings and revivals contributed to a rapid proliferation of holiness groups throughout the country. From this movement of the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, holiness periodicals, liberal arts colleges, Bible institutes, and vigorous home and foreign missions were established (pp. 250-271). Home missions went beyond church planting to active social work. Rescue missions, homes for "unfortunate girls," and the temperance movement were focal (Smith, 1962, pp. 47-53). In addition to meeting the short-term material needs of the poor, holiness social work aimed at the long-term solution to poverty by providing a church home for the poor. (pp. 54-59)

The holiness movement was truly a part of the Progressive movement. Just as those in social work, educational reform, women's rights, and bureaucratic agencies fervently believed in their causes, those in the

holiness movement were equally committed to addressing the needs of the poor and other social problems through the message of holiness. As a result, a myriad of churches and holiness denominations were formed with holiness as the mission (Smith, 1962, p. 204).

### The Nazarenes

By the early 1890's, the opposition to holiness groups from the Methodist hierarchy increased. Many Methodist Bishops were caught between the increasingly influential modernists and advocates of the Social Gospel on one-side and holiness enthusiasts on the other. Many believed that if they wished to adhere to their holiness ways and continue with vital evangelical work, they would have to leave the church (Smith, 1962, p. 47). The specific reason given to explain why a new denomination was needed "was that the machinery and the methods of the older churches had proved a hindrance to the work of evangelizing the poor" (pp. 110-111).

One of these Methodists was Phineas Bresee (Bangs, 1995, p. 34). Believing that he could no longer function as he felt like he should in the aspect of promoting holiness within the Methodist church, Bresee founded the first Nazarene church in Los Angeles, California, in 1895 (p. 195). Eighty-two members united as charter members of

the Church of the Nazarene, and within a short time, their numbers had grown to 135. The selection of the name Nazarene represented the name Jesus used of himself, the name that connected Jesus to the "great toiling struggling, sorrowing heart of the world" in order that the world would have hope (p. 111). The first publication of the Church of the Nazarene announced:

The Church of the Nazarene is a simple, primitive church, a church of the people and for the people. It has no new doctrines, only the old, old Bible truths. It seeks to discard all superfluous forms and ecclesiasticism and go back to the plain simple words of Christ. It is not a mission, it is a church with a mission. It is a banding together of hearts that have found the peace of God, and which now in their gladness, go out to carry the message of the unsearchable riches of the gospel of Christ to other suffering, discouraged, sin sick souls. Its mission is to everyone upon whom the battle of life has been sore, and to every heart that hungers for cleansing from sin. Come.  
(cited in Smith, 1962, p. 111)

The newly formed church saw rapid growth the first year to 350 members. In the subsequent years, membership grew to 1,500 and numerous churches were established. From this rapid growth, the leaders saw the need for the church to become formally organized (Bangs, 1995 pp. 203-204). John Wesley's theology is "imprinted on" the Nazarene Church in its most basic beliefs (McGonigle, 2003, p. 14).

In many ways, the beliefs and actions of the first Nazarenes were molded by the same environment and

experiences that influenced American society at large (Crow & Lively, 2000, p. 3). Concerned with the poor, the uneducated, and the needy, early Nazarenes worked to establish guidelines that reflect these ideologies (Bangs, 1995, pp. 183-192). The government of the church was democratic (Smith, 1962, p. 113). All officers within the church were elected by the membership, no money-raising methods that would distinguish the poor from the rich were allowed, and the original constitution specifically recognized the right of women to preach (p. 113). The Nazarenes provided equal rights for women and men to all church offices, as well as the ministry (Bangs, 1995, p. 201). Phineas F. Bresee in later years said of women in the church, "Some of our best men are women" (p. 201). Furthermore, the chief aim of the early church was to preach holiness to the poor (Smith, 1962, p. 50). The first Manual, that constituted the by-laws of the church, outlined the purposes of the church. Through the agencies and services such as city missions, evangelistic services, house-to-house visitation, caring for the poor, comforting the dying, they boldly proclaimed their mission was "to go into the poorer parts of the cities and the neglected places and by the power of the Holy Ghost create centers of fire" (p. 114). Equally significant, the early Nazarenes

believed that "worship was joyously free" (p. 118). All of these activities helped to address the social problems of the time and to build a community of people with a distinct world-view and mission (Crow & Lively, 2000, p. 3).

### The Church and Education

From the very beginning of the church, a great emphasis was placed on education (Smith, 1962, p. 134). Not only did the early Nazarenes want a well-developed Sunday School structure, but soon they realized the need for a college or university. Originally to have its focus as a Bible college, Pacific Bible College, now Point Loma Nazarene University, was founded in 1901 with 42 students enrolling. The curriculum included Old Testament, New Testament, homiletics, and Bible holiness (Smith, 1962, pp. 137-139).

Education had been a hallmark of the holiness movement. Hundreds of Bible colleges and institutes were organized as the men and women in the holiness movement recognized a need to educate their men, women, and children. Consequently, as various holiness organizations and churches joined with the Nazarenes, they brought with them their colleges and schools. Various colleges were merged to form new colleges, and by the early 1920s, the Church of the Nazarene established either through merging

or planting six four-year liberal arts colleges in California, Idaho, Illinois, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, and Tennessee (Smith, 1962, pp. 322-330). This continuing emphasis on education is expressed in an article written in 1933 by one of the general church leaders:

There are several reasons why these holiness colleges are necessary. First, we need schools to preserve the fundamentals of our faith. . . . In the second place, we need the holiness college to build the right type of Christian character. . . . In the third place, we need holiness colleges in order to train men and women to propagate the doctrine of full salvation in the earth. . . . Our schools should be well attended and adequately supported. A church is made or destroyed by her educational institutions. (Williams, 1933, p. 1)

In 1945, the Nazarene Theological Seminary was founded. By the 1970s, two more liberal arts colleges were established in Kansas and Ohio and a Bible College in Colorado.

The Nazarenes divided the nation into educational zones, and the people in the churches supported the college of their zone financially and by sending their young people to be educated (Smith, 1962 p. 263). Teams of musical and evangelistic groups from the colleges visited the churches, held meetings, and provided an opportunity for young people in the churches to embrace the idea of getting a college degree from a Nazarene college (Gresham & Gresham, 1998, p. 102).



## Christian Colleges and Universities

Christian colleges and universities are located across the United States and in many regions of the world. Historically in higher education, there are binding threads that unify Christian thought with liberal learning. "The wedding of Christian thought and liberal learning is a phenomenon that has continued to this day" (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 16). There are approximately 4,000 higher education degree-granting institutions in the United States. Private non-profit campuses make up 1,600 of that total number and 900 of those campuses are self-described as religiously affiliated (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001>).

Each of those 900 religiously affiliated campuses has an institutional mission statement that provides clues into the institution's tradition, values, vision, and ethos. The public mission statement provides a glimpse into the heart and "soul" of that college or university. The mission statement "articulates the organization's essential nature, its values, and its work" (<http://www.tgci.com>). Encompassed in the essential nature of a Christian university "are three components of the Christian tradition that must be publicly relevant: its vision, its ethos, and the Christian persons who bear that vision and ethos" (Benne, 2001, p. 6).

All three of these components of a religious tradition must be publicly relevant in the lives of colleges and universities if they are to be genuine Christian colleges and universities. The vision must be relevant in the intellectual life

and give theoretical justification and guidance for the ethos. The ethos of the tradition must in some relevant way condition and affect the life of the college and university. And persons who bear the vision and the ethos must participate influentially in the life of the school. (p. 8)

The Wesleyan-holiness theological tradition is the lens by which Nazarenes think about God, evil, human nature, faith, the Bible, salvation, and life in general (Leadingham, 1994, p. 8). This affects student relationships with faculty, the nature of the classroom experience, and university culture. Thus, the learner who attends Southern Nazarene University, encounters, either directly and/or indirectly, this Wesleyan-holiness theological tradition influence.

#### Southern Nazarene University

There have been two name changes associated with Southern Nazarene University. The first name change occurred with little fanfare in 1955. Under the guidance of President Roy H. Cantrell, Bethany-Peniel College became Bethany Nazarene College. It was then determined that for the average person, the word ``Peniel'' was a difficult word to pronounce and was often confused with the word ``penal'' (Gresham & Gresham, 1998, p. 82).

The second name change occurred in 1986 in the midst of much turbulence under the leadership of President Ponder Gilliland. Early in the 1985-86 academic year, Bethany Nazarene College was facing a serious student-enrollment decline. This enrollment decline forced the university to

institute personnel cuts, which resulted in lawsuits filed in civil court. It also acted as a catalyst to serious consideration of the non-traditional adult degree-completion program. It was during this time that preparations for the beginning of the first non-traditional Management of Human Resources (MHR) adult degree-completion group were made. The scheduled start date for that first group was January 16, 1986. There were unhappy constituents who did not agree with decisions made concerning the university, which also resulted in increased tension. President Gilliland pressed on and maintained that with the addition of "adult students" on campus, the title "university" more clearly reflected the institution's educational standing. On February 19, 1986, the Board of Trustees voted to support the name change to Southern Nazarene University (SNU) (Gresham & Gresham, 1998, p. 146). President Gilliland stressed that the word "Southern" more clearly represented the four-state, SNU educational region that consisted of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas rather than just the location of a town in one of the states. The word "Nazarene" continued to represent proudly the association with the Nazarene denomination. Finally, the word "University" "recognizes the present and is forward looking in our purpose" (Gresham & Gresham, 1998, p. 146). During this controversial time in the history of SNU, the question that begged to be addressed than was, "How do you preserve the core and adapt to a changing world?"

(Collins, 2001, p. 195). Today the university continues to struggle with this question in light of change and emphasis to the business face of higher education.

### The Business of Education

Higher education is not just business; it is big business. There are national and global implications associated with the business of education. In the knowledge-based global economy the business of education is of ardent interest. For several years, the World Bank has attempted to put together an agenda on higher education referred to as a reform agenda ([http://www.caut.ca/English/Bulletin/98\\_nov/lead.htm](http://www.caut.ca/English/Bulletin/98_nov/lead.htm)). A tremendous opportunity is presented as the global network of the Internet is combined with "the flow of supply and demand for postsecondary education across the world" (Pittinsky, 2003, p. 66). Interestingly, the primary concepts in the World Bank's higher education reform agenda are the business concepts: "deregulation, privatization, and market orientation" ([http://www.caut.ca/English/Bulletin/8\\_nov/lead.htm](http://www.caut.ca/English/Bulletin/8_nov/lead.htm)).

The global education market is fueled for vast growth as more organizations and governments "open markets for private and for-profit providers to meet educational needs where public funds cannot" (Pittinsky, 2003, p. 66). As a result of the knowledge economy and globalization, there is

a sharply expanding global request for education (p. 68). This has created the market for an industry in global education (pp. 68-69). In many nations where state provision is inadequate, private education, both for-profit and non-profit, has filled in the gap to meet quality education demands (p. 74). Some view that the factor that impedes the implementation of a global reform agenda in higher education is "the traditional university in general and its faculty members in particular" ([http://www.caut.ca/English/Bulletin/98\\_nov/lead.htm](http://www.caut.ca/English/Bulletin/98_nov/lead.htm)). The revelation that "education is part of a global, networked knowledge economy is only now becoming a working assumption" (Pittinsky, 2003, p. 70). The demand for higher education globally, in all likelihood, will increase exponentially and have far reaching consequences. On the national level the higher education market is "diverse and complex, driven by market forces, societal demands, and government policy" (pp. 43-44). Higher education in the United States is the envy of many nations. It is built on a long history of tradition, but as an institution it is not immune to current pressures.

The estimated total expenditure on training and education in the United States is about \$800 billion, which next to health care is the second largest sector of the

national economy ([http://www.educationupdate.com/archives/2002/feb02/htmls/business\\_educa.html](http://www.educationupdate.com/archives/2002/feb02/htmls/business_educa.html)). It is no surprise that higher education in the United States has become a \$250 billion industry (Pittinsky, 2003, p. 69). Higher education "bears little resemblance to its origins in 1636, when Harvard opened to train sons of the upper class to become ministers of American Puritanism" (<http://web1.epnet.com/citation.asp?tb=1&ug>). By the very nature of the national economy higher education has earned a place in the world of business economics. It is evident that the powerful "forces that are buffeting higher education today" have the potential to alter it immensely (Pittinsky, 2003, p. 25). The future of higher education in the United States will inevitably include transition and change. The degree of that alteration is yet to be fully determined.

Presently in higher education there is increased legislative and executive intervention, more so now, than it has been for decades (Maehl, 2000, p. 25). Some feel that this is primarily as a result of frustration with the unhurried pace of change in higher education (p. 25). Unsurprisingly, those who complain the loudest that their educational needs are unmet are the "major constituencies served by higher education" (p. 25). Possibly, in the future with enough pressure, the political process could

plausibly respond with "new laws to regulate the ailing schools" or with the transfer of "budget monies to more popular programs" (<http://www.educause.edu/pub/er/reviewArticles/31620.html>). There are two typical responses frequently chosen by those who are unhappy with their higher education options and those options include the opportunity to "choose private alternatives (at a considerably higher price) or complain to the political process" (<http://www.educause.edu/pub/er/reviewArticles/31620.html>). In actuality, interested parties in higher education have chosen to do both.

The pressure for higher education to adapt or change is evident. The reality is that "as we shift from an industrial economy to a knowledge economy—a time when what people know is their greatest financial asset and that of their employer—our nation's largest knowledge industry—academe—was bound to be impacted" (Pittinsky, 2003, p. 14). It cannot be denied that despite its rich tradition, conceivably, higher education could be on "the eve of a revolution" (p. 16). Higher education has a tremendous opportunity to take the critical leadership role in the transformation of itself with its vast capability and resources (Maehl, 2000, p. 25). There are some that believe that higher education is "hopelessly inefficient

and unresponsive and unwilling, or unable, to undertake reform for higher education" and it "must be forced to account for their market position" ([http://www.caut.ca/English/Bulletin/98\\_nov/lead.htm](http://www.caut.ca/English/Bulletin/98_nov/lead.htm)). Others believe that higher education storehouses "extensive resources of talent and programmatic experience on which to base new initiatives" (Maehl, 2000, p. 26). Perhaps the question that begs to be addressed is not if higher education can transform itself, but the question to be tackled is will higher education transform itself "building on existing conventions" with consideration given to the historical purposes of higher education (Pittinsky, 2003, p. 10). Higher education has an opportunity to respond to the challenge to change itself or to simply wait and perhaps be forced to "change suddenly through high-profile initiatives that create change all at once" (p. 10). Either way, there is an increased likelihood that there is and will be continued interest in the modification of higher education both globally and nationally.

The landscape of higher education has already been altered and there are many indications that suggest that there will continue to be modification. This continued alteration will be fostered by the "changing demographics of the adult learner," the "effect of the competitive



global economy"; the personal, social, and economic need for "perpetual learning"; accessibility of "information technology," and the capabilities attached to e-learning (Maehl, 2000, pp. 16-24; see also Pittinsky, 2003). Some of the forces driving change according to futurist Robert Tucker include the following:

1. Real time. Real time is the time between when the customer says, "I want" and "I got".  
...Today's time-starved consumer "wants it now"...The days are numbered for businesses who steal customers' time. Businesses now must challenge time-based assumptions to be successful.
2. No hassle convenience. Customers have more choice today and will "vote with their feet and mouse clicks for businesses who give them convenience"....
3. Age waves. The graying of America is changing the way business must think about their customers. There are now 76 million baby boomers. They also must consider the psychology of generation X, a group of 44 million. Gen X'ers are more independent... and are telling baby boomers that their old rules are dead...
4. Fashionization. Today we live in an "in one minute, out the next" society... Businesses are faced with a constant necessity to redefine customer needs. Everything has become relative—price, quality, value... How are you reinventing "you" to be part of the future?
5. Mass customization. ...delivering products, services, and solutions designed to meet the unique needs of each customer. ...from today and beyond, mass customization rules. Products now are customized to individual consumers.  
(Tucker, 1998, pp. 22-23)

As businesses evolve to respond to these influences, there are two trends "emerging that allows customers to get what

they want—bigger, cheaper, and faster” (p. 23). Those two escalating trends are emerging technologies and more sophisticated buyers (p. 23). Today business and industry is forced to take into account these trends and it is evident that these trends are on a collision course with higher education.

The impact of these influences has yet to be fully determined in higher education, but there is indication that they have the potential to be far reaching. Upon reflection, there are identifiable points of change that have contributed to recent shifts in higher education. These inflection points have acted as a catalyst for some of the changes currently seen on the higher education landscape with institutions like Southern Nazarene University moving toward a more business type model with emphasis given to such business concepts as mission, inflection point, return on investment, customer empowerment, and mass customization.

### Mission

Mission brings “clarity of focus” to every action taken by individuals that work for an organization at some level (Goodstein, Nolan, & Preiffer, 1993, p. 169). In addition, the mission provides to those individuals “understanding of how what they do is tied to a greater

purpose'' (p. 169). It must be harmonious with the organization's core values ``providing a guiding star by which to steer the organization'' (p. 169-170). Mission is at the heart of all that is done within the organization.

Driving forces are the ``forces that drive an organization'' that provides an ``organization's competitive advantage'' in the marketplace (Goodstein, Nolan, & Preiffer, 1993, p. 179). They help an organization ``determine and integrate the strategic choices'' that are most advantage to the organization (p. 179). The perceived most important driving force may be included in the mission statement ensuring sufficient ``allocation of resources according'' to the priority given (p. 181) If all decisions are guided by the mission of the organization then with the inclusion of the driving force, it is always given priority.

The identification of the organization's ``distinctive competency or competencies'' may be a clue to an organization's market niche (Goodstein, Nolan, & Preiffer, 1993, p. 181). These competencies are ``an organization's strategic heartbeat, which it can leverage to develop strategic advantage'' (p. 182). It is a final element of the mission statement (p. 181). Southern Nazarene University's Adult Studies department has specialists in the area of adult education that serve the university well in meeting the needs of the adult learner. Utilizing this resource has contributed to the university's desire to educate students with the attainment of a sound Return on

Investment while being attentive to the business of education.

### Inflection Point

In business and industry, an inflection point is a term which "describes a sudden and massive change in a business market or technology use" (Gates, 1999, p. 446). The inflection point that catapults "major change in the competitive landscape, can take many forms" (Grove, 2002b, p. 11; Puffer 1999). It may be in the form of an "introduction of new technologies, a new regulatory environment, or a sudden shift in customer preferences" (p. 11). However, typically "the change usually hits the organization in such a way that those" working as "senior management are among the last to notice" (p. 11). It is correct that in the midst of "existing business, it's not always clear where the next growth opportunity is" (Gates, 1999, p. 5). Moments that represent monumental changes are what is called "strategic inflection points—events that cause you to fundamentally change your business strategy" (p. 11). It is "at such moments in the life of an organization" that "nothing less will do" (Grove, 2002b, p. 11). The crossroads of such a moment in the life of an organization is monumental. It is in that instant of acknowledgment that everything is changed for that

organization. All that came before that instant is done, and all that will be in the future is unknown.

A primary example of an inflection point in higher education relating to the higher education market is the fact that "students 25 and older make up 40 percent of the enrollment in higher education, compared with 28 percent in 1970" (Marcus, 2000, p. 1). In the United States "the inclusion of adult learners as participants in higher education is now well established" (Maehl, 2000, p. 1). The changing demographics of the adult learner in higher education have been a major inflection point relating to changing market demands. The results of this can be seen in the creation of non-traditional adult degree-completion programs in many private non-profit universities, such as Southern Nazarene University, and also in the creation of the private for-profit university.

It is not always easy to distinguish a strategic inflection point from the many changes that "routinely impinge on" business and education, but the "answers to three questions may signal the onset of such a change" (Grove, 2002b, p. 11; Puffer 1999). Those three questions are:

1. Has the company of the entity that you most worry about shifted? ...If you have one bullet, what would you shoot with it? If

you change the direction of the gun, that is one of the signals that you may be dealing with something more than an ordinary shift in the competitive landscape.

2. Is your key complementor—a company whose work you rely on to make your product more available—changing? A shift in direction by a partner or market ally can be as decisive as a move by a competitor?
3. Do the people you have worked with for 20-years seem to be talking gibberish? Are they suddenly talking about people, products, or companies that no one had heard of a year before? If so, it's time to pay attention to what's going on. (p. 11)

An additional indication of a potential strategic inflection point within the organization is the escalation of discussion to "emotional arguments" in debate in regard to the pivotal point which is usually considered to be bad news (Grove, 2002a, p. 4; Puffer 1999). "Bad news can be disheartening," but just "ignoring bad news is a formula for decline" (Gates, 1999, p. 177). In the 1980's the "bad news" for Southern Nazarene University (SNU) was a serious enrollment decline in the traditional student population and the university had to face a serious crisis (Gresham & Gresham, 1998, p. 128). It is believed that if SNU had not addressed the bad news, which resulted in the development of the adult degree-completion programs, the university would not be in existence today.

Often before changes can be made as a result of a strategic inflection point, the organization must

experience a "Valley of Death" process (Grove, 2002a, pp. 4-5; Puffer 1999). When it comes to major change, frequently it is found that "we love change when it happens to somebody else" (p. 4). For the organization it is imperative in the change process that fear be dealt with, that the process of grief be allowed for the death of the old ways of doing things, and chaos and strategic dissonance be encouraged in the preparation of finding new direction, in order to ultimately reach the stage of acceptance so that resources can be deployed (p. 5). Allowing this process will get the organization readied "to balance the things you want to do to respond to the new world with the things that you are still doing" (p. 5). The management of this balance is one of the greatest "challenges" in the organization (p. 5). The "primary key in all of this is to make changes as fast as possible because time is your ally" (p. 4). Quick responses in higher education are not typically the norm but are illustrative of the way that some private non-profit and for-profit universities have responded to the changing demographics of the adult learner.

The evidence of these responses can be seen in a myriad of ways including the fact that there is an increased rate of investment by the private sector in

higher education than at any prior point (Pittinsky, 2003, p. 18). In addition, some private universities with "obsolescent" higher education designs have responded with non-traditional adult degree-completion programs in order to react swiftly to enrollment declines while state-controlled universities have responded "generally much slower" (<http://www.educause.edu/pub/er/reviewArticles/31620.html>). The for-profit universities and others, which are sometimes referred to as the profit seekers, "believe collegiate education is in need of a private-sector makeover" (Pittinsky, 2003, p. 18). Higher education is traditionally viewed as "low in productivity, high in cost, poor in management, and uninvolved in technology" (p. 18). With this in mind, those in the private sector believe that they can do better than higher education.

One result is the fact that in higher education today, "there are for-profit companies competing against nonprofits for student populations" (Pittinsky, 2003, p. 14). In higher education the for-profit segment "offers a focused, cost-effective degree product for the market" (p. 9). The for-profit higher education provider has entered on the scene "with sufficient success to attract the attention and investment recommendation of major brokers" (Maehl, 2000, p. 25). The apparent success of the for-



profit higher education provider presents additional evidence that the public universities have been slow to act and that "the business design of the university is becoming obsolete" (<http://www.educause.edu/pub/er/reviewArticles/31620.html>). The higher education consumers are required to look for "private alternatives and are complaining loudly to the political process" (<http://www.educause.edu/pub/er/reviewArticles/31620.html>). Return on investment may become a common part of the higher education vocabulary as it struggles to respond to this increased pressure.

#### Return on Investment

Higher education has a long history with the subject matter of business and corporate America. In higher education every year there are many degrees awarded to learners on this very topic. Higher education has knowledge and experience "with corporate America as an originator of research and development, but the demands of playing a similar role as the ongoing developer of professional capacity are new and touch the core activity of the campus" (Pittinsky, 2003, p. 9). The time of believing in the "idealistic notion of a university operating outside the daily financial grind of revenues, expenses, and budgets" is ended (p. 41). It is an actuality that "today's institutions of higher education

are complex businesses" (p. 41). Higher education like "all businesses focus on a few basic elements: customers; products and services; revenues; costs; competitors; delivery; and employees" (Gates, 1999, p. 22). It must be understood that the position of "higher education as an industry is being shaped profoundly by the fundamental economics of the business-labor, facilities, which courses are profitable, and which are not" (Pittinsky, 2003, p. 41). Higher education like business, involves the "challenging and intriguing" issue in business of return on investment (Phillips, 1997, p. xiii). What is the ultimate cost attached to the business of education and how does it relate to the sometimes rather subjective mission of higher education?

The topic of return on investment (ROI) in business is often met with fear and in trepidation. The association of ROI with the business of higher education will undoubtedly be expected to be received in the same manner. ROI is a "business imperative making its way into education and training" (Ausburn & Finney, 2002, p. 1). ROI is an accountability process that is considered to be the "ultimate level of evaluation" especially as it relates to training or education (Phillips, 1997, p. 9). ROI is a conservative formula that "essentially places training

investment on a level playing field with other investments using the same formula and similar concepts" (p. 154). The formula used for ROI calculation "is net program benefits divided by cost" with the resulting ratio "expressed as a percent when the fractional values are multiplied by 100" (p. 153). The "net benefits are program benefits minus program costs" (p. 153). The relationship of ROI to benefits/costs ratio (BCR) indicates that the "ROI value is related to the BCR by a factor of one" (p. 153). There is a specific ROI formula and essential criteria for use in an effective ROI process.

The use of ROI in education and training, instead of the standard BCR, allows for "some subjective input, including estimations" that may be a part training and educational investments (Phillips, 1997, p. 154). It is important to note that "an ROI minimum of 25% is set by some organizations" (p. 154). The target value minimum of 25% is usually viewed as a higher standard because it is typically "above the percentage required for other types of investments" (p. 154). The higher standard brings more credibility to the sometimes subjective nature of estimations attached to educational investments.

The calculated ROI ascertains if the benefits of a "program, expressed in monetary values, have outweighed the

costs" (Phillips, 1997, p. 18). A ROI also helps to determine if an investment in a program has made an overall contribution to the organization (p. 18). Calculated program ROIs are instrumental in the establishment of priorities in organization planning (p. 18). The concentration on measurable objectives in the ROI results-based process also improves the effectiveness of all programs (p. 18). Finally, the consistent and comprehensive ROI process convincingly brings respect and credibility to specific investments made by the organization (p. 18). At Southern Nazarene University (SNU) ROI is instrumental in decision-making concerning the implementation of new adult degree-completion program options. It must be clearly demonstrated that a new degree-completion program is viable, by providing benefit to the university before investment capital is provided. In addition, existing adult degree-completion programs must continue to provide an acceptable ROI or they will not persist. Increased prominence will be placed on ROI as the business of higher education is emphasized in response to empowered consumers who forcefully voice their higher education preferences.

## Customer Empowerment

The very foundation of higher education is changing. The faces of the learners have changed and are continuing to change. In adult degree-completion programs learners are consumers, and they are often professionally oriented, older, and "coming back to the institution more often and with different expectations" (Pittinsky, 2003, p. 14). Jobs and interpersonal relationships frequently overshadow their education, and they desire higher education that is "convenient, is efficient in providing service, and offers quality instruction" (p. 17). It is without question that "higher education is becoming more individualized" with learners setting the "educational agenda" (p. 20). Learners today are informed consumers of higher education and are empowered to make choices based on information that was not previously available a decade ago.

The readily available information found on the Internet alone is raising consumer expectations (Gates, 1999, p. 89). Adult learners take access to information for granted, and they do not attend a higher educational institution simply for information access. This is an information age, and they are better-informed consumers of higher education options. By the time that adult learners have attended an information meeting about one of the

Southern Nazarene University adult degree-completion programs, they have already been comparison-shopping in order to meet their higher educational needs. In the information age every business will need to "adapt to get customers' attention in the crowded marketplace" (p. 90). In the future "only a few businesses will succeed by having the lowest price, so most will need a strategy that includes customer service" (p. 90). This is evident in the over 850 adult learners enrolled currently in adult degree-completion programs from Southern Nazarene University (SNU Weekly Census Report, March 21, 2003). There are lower-priced, higher-education alternatives in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area, but they chose Southern Nazarene University (SNU). Adult learners wanted access to education in a way that was convenient for their lifestyle. SNU responded to the consumers, and they agreed to pay for the perceived higher cost of the program in exchange for having their educational requests met with a service approach.

In higher education if the service approach is selected, it will be essential to "arm your knowledge workers with digital information tools to connect with customers and manage those relationships" (Gates, 1999, p. 90). In each of the programs all adult learners are

assigned an academic advisor and program director who has immediate access to their academic program plan. There is a contact note feature on the electronic planning form that allows for the tracking of every contact with each individual learner. At a quick glance, the academic advisor can be apprised of the learner's past communication history with the academic advisor or another member of the academic team. In building relationship, this is a value-added component that enables learners to know that they are being heard and responded to in the context of their specific educational experience. Higher education consumers are able to benefit from a more customized and personalized educational experience and ultimately SNU benefits.

#### Mass Customization

There are driving forces behind the quest for change in education, as business. With increased competition to attract students along with more sophisticated consumers of higher education, mass customization in higher education is forthcoming. It is "the ability to customize and personalize products and services for individuals" that "has created the business phenomenon known as mass customization" (Ausburn & Finney, 2002, p. 1). Without doubt, "we are witnessing the dawn of a new age of

customization, an age in which new technologies, increased competition, short product life cycle, and more assertive customers are leading firms towards mass customization of their products and services" (Kakati, 2002, p. 85). In the world today, "the ability to offer customized products with short lead times is getting to be a huge area of competitive differentiation" (Andel, 2002, p. 24). In higher education, the opportunity exists to eventually provide a very different form of educational experience that is "individualized, interactive, immediate, and integrated" (<http://www.justmedical.ch/En/editorial.cfm>). It is the digital nervous system which "comprises the digital processes that closely link every aspect of a company's thoughts and actions" that will be foundational to the mass customization of higher education (Gates, 1999, p. 15). The ability to track information and to respond quickly and appropriately to markets, programs, and learners in higher education requires the capability of information technology digital processes.

Typically references to mass customization "generally focuses on the operational strategies" that allows businesses "to meet individual customer needs and preferences in an efficient manner" (Gupta, 2002, p. 20). In terms of outcomes for higher education consumers in



general, "such benefits may be as simple as providing economic recognition..., or social recognition (such as addressing a customer by name the next time he walks in), or adapting a part of the process or system to meet individual customer requirements" (p. 20). In adult degree-completion programs at Southern Nazarene University (SNU), the customization of programs is a part of departmental operations. Program directors take very seriously the ability to adapt and adjust programs to fit market needs. The evolution of the Network Management degree-completion program is continuous in order to remain current with technological changes in order meet market needs.

There are many factors to take into account when considering mass customization in the form of product or service. The very thing that makes it possible to consider mass customization in an organization is the implementation of a digital nervous system that enables information to flow through the organization for "maximum and constant learning" through communication (Gates, 1999, p. 1). This is essential because one of the significant factors in mass customization is communication because "mass customization requires mass communication from design to distribution" (Andel, 2002, p. 27). There is an exponential need for "a

fast flow of good information to streamline processes, raise quality, and improve business execution" (Gates, 1999, p. 4). The choice to purposefully listen to the learners and the market with a goal to investigate what is wanted and with the determined purpose to discover how best to accommodate those desires while being efficiently responsive requires communication on every level of the higher education organization. Program modularization enables SNU to be current and responsive.

Modularization is another significant element in the ability to provide mass customization in the customization of SNU program services. In adult degree-completion programs, a shift has already occurred in the delivery of courses. They are no longer referred to as courses. They are referred to as modules, and these individual modules are not limited for use in just one degree-completion program. A module on Values is used in several different degree-completion programs by simply adjusting the content to apply to the application of any specific given degree-completion program. The design of the module allows for a program director to simply adjust elements of the module to fit program specific needs. This is a very efficient customizing method used in the SNU adult degree-completion

programs. The modularization prevents program directors from having to always re-invent a new program's content.

A "good logistics execution system (LES) is essential to any mass customization strategy" (Andel, 2002, p. 26). LES requires streamlined systems that are in place in order for efficient execution since "mass customization requires constant innovation in products and services as well as process capability" (Kakati, 2002, p. 86). Presently at SNU, program updates and curriculum revisions can be made quickly and easily since student and instructor materials are generated in-house only as needed program by program. SNU is not held hostage and obligated by the costs attached to program materials outsourced and perhaps outdated just because they are in stock; learners have access to the most current information.

As technology evolves in the future in higher education, it may very well be possible to commit to the concept of mass customization of curriculum with consideration of the unique needs of the individual learner with attention given to the learning styles, preferences, and academic aptitudes (Kinnaman, 2001, p. 96). As the digital nervous system at SNU continues to improve, the point could arrive where curriculum and module materials could be designed to specifically adapt to the needs of the

individual learner if the benefit would not exceed the cost of doing so. In higher education, mass customization hinges on the strength of the digital nervous system implemented in that organization.

In addition, the word mass used before customization "provides a ROI perspective to meeting customer needs; mass customization focuses on the costs related to providing customized offerings" (Gupta, 2002, p. 20). It is important when considering mass customization that the overall process encourages higher education "to work toward creating adaptable and flexible processes and systems that can eventually provide customized offerings at the cost. . . of mass-produced goods" (p. 20). Customizing an educational offering for individual learners could be a "prohibitively expensive strategy to follow, and thus a monitor on the cost side of the equation" would be required (p. 20). It is important to remember that "no strategy can provide sustainable competitive advantage, unless the cost-benefit analysis supports the strategy" (p. 20). That is a reality in business and also in the business of education.

Adult learners today have different attitudes about how higher education should be. They come to higher education empowered by information sources like the Internet and desiring better access to education, wanting a

bigger say in their education, and resenting the one-size-fits-all model of higher education from the past. The world is undergoing colossal upheavals in an increasingly electronic environment. Higher education is and will continue to be impacted by what is taking place in the world.

Higher education "faces an era of increasing demand for its services but has reduced financial resources to carry out its traditional role" (Maehl, 2000, p. 24). There are observers who describe higher education as the only remaining "major economic sector that has not gone through restructuring, and they make ominous comparisons between it and the health care industry of the 1980's" (p. 25). It is the reality of the bottom line that sometimes forces higher education into the "high-stakes search for new funding sources" and into "become increasingly entrepreneurial in their sources of new revenue streams" that provide "much higher profit margins than traditional undergraduate education" (Pittinsky, 2003, p. 8). "Educational institutions not only have a responsibility but an obligation to be a role model, setting the examples in their own organizations for industry by leading the way in customer service, technology, and human relations as well as flexibility and adaptability to a rapidly changing

world" (Kutz, 1998, p. 189). In the face of looming change but with the strong desire to preserve that which is sacred to the ultimate purpose of higher education, it is imperative to assess what must be preserved in light of change.

One answer to charting the future of higher education as business lies in "understanding the fundamental mission of our nation's diverse colleges and universities" with a willingness to pioneer change (Pittinsky, 2003, p. 25). There are three activities that higher education engages in that are considered sacred. These unique activities are "discovery and creation of new knowledge, preservation and dissemination of knowledge, and application of knowledge to solving social problems" which is also known as service (p. 26). The call that goes out to higher education today is to confront the challenge of higher education as business, including return on investment, while providing consideration to higher education's original purpose. At large and individual institutions, must engage in a responsive position toward change if Higher Education hopes to give voice to the higher education sculpture of tomorrow with the continued purposeful embrace of the sacred traditional purposes of higher education while there is still opportunity (p. 25).

At this moment, higher education is at "a very odd midpoint between the death of one kind of paradigm" and the "yet-undefined formation of an entirely new paradigm" (Gales, 1994, p. 20). Perhaps it is time in higher education to provide revolutionary leadership encompassing co-intentional education where administrators, consumers, "teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge" (Freire, 1999, p. 51). Learners must be at the heart of the decision-making process of re-thinking and re-creating higher education for the future. This decision making process will require authentic thinking; "authentic thinking, that is concerned about reality, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication" (p. 58). Reality for higher education includes the fact that there are definite and increased business implications to be addressed requiring revolutionary leadership taking into account the learners' "view of the world: a view which explicitly and implicitly contains their concerns" (p. 163). Academics and administrators who desire to provide leadership, in addressing higher education realities for the future, must accept responsibility for "applying their

knowledge and intelligence to the work of collaboration and disagreement that can cultivate the best in liberal education for the future" (Brown, 2000, p. 523). One way of addressing the business of education at Southern Nazarene University is through the Adult Studies degree-completion programs designed for the specific needs of working adults.

### Adult Studies

Instrumental to the success of the Southern Nazarene University (SNU) degree-completion programs is a format that provides adults that work with access to education through the SNU Adult Studies Department. Every effort is to make education convenient and to be responsive to the needs of the learner. Bi-weekly information meetings offered in the evenings permit many adults to attend without the sacrifice of the work schedule. Program representatives are available during the day for adults that prefer a morning or afternoon appointment. Standardized packets of admissions information are prepared with specific program and financial aid information. The very first time that a SNU degree-completion program cohort group meets, the Financial Aid Office and Business Office attends that meeting in order to assist with parking stickers, student identification cards, and money matters. Also, in attendance to assist with questions and clarify educational process for the learner are the Program Director, Academic Advisor, and the module



instructor for the learner's first class. The adult student's time is valuable therefore, it is mandatory that every element of educational business be centralized and attended expeditiously.

A calendar is provided that clearly indicates course sequencing for the degree-completion program which reflects Southern Nazarene University's commitment to provide all courses required for program completion. This calendar includes a program beginning date and ending date so that life planning can revolve around the learner's educational commitment. Classes meet consistently one night a week on the same evening throughout the learner's degree-completion program from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. One week prior to the beginning of each semester, the learner receives the delivery of all required class textbooks and class materials in the classroom. The Financial Aid Office and Business Office are located conveniently in the same area as the Admissions Office in an effort to accommodate the learner's busy schedule. There are institutional barriers that will sometimes dissuade the working adult from participating in an educational endeavor (Cross, 1981, p. 98), and Southern Nazarene University has made extensive efforts to overcome them.

In addition to a program that meets the needs of working adults, SNU's Adult Studies program utilizes and applies adult learning principles in its curriculum design, coursework, and classroom instruction. The development of

all program curricula is the responsibility of a Program Director in consultation with content experts and adult learning specialists. The development of Faculty Guides with module materials specifically identifying learner participatory activities and experiences to compliment the learning objectives is instrumental to a successful classroom experience with new faculty or faculty with limited experience with the adult learner. The accelerated nature of the SNU degree-completion programs requires that the student commit to class preparation prior to class attendance. All class materials include assignments and readings to be completed in advance by the learner. The preparedness of the learner enables the classroom experience to take on the dynamics of a workshop or seminar experience. The instructor is a facilitator of learning. Programs built on adult learning principles such as these provide opportunities for the adult learner to participate in the learning experience in order to connect concepts studied to present and past life experiences with the consideration of future implications (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 223).

In the undergraduate degree-completion program options, efforts to provide a variety of choices to meet the diverse interests of students and marketplace demands are evident. The Family Studies and Gerontology program leads to a Bachelor of Science degree with a major in Family Studies and Gerontology. This is an interdisciplinary social science major focusing on increasing understanding of the

family, the aging individual, and the aging population in contemporary society. The Network Management program results in a Bachelor of Science degree in System Network Management. It also provides academic requirements for Microsoft® certification. The Organizational Leadership program leads to a Bachelor of Science degree with a major in Organizational Leadership. Coursework in this program enables the student to develop or increase effectiveness in working with people. The Registered Nurse Bachelor of Science degree is designed for associate degree and diploma nurses who wish to complete their bachelor's degree (SNU Catalog, 2003-2005).

The Bridge Program provides an accelerated format for adult learners to complete general education requirements in preparation to enter one of the undergraduate degree-completion options. Course offerings in the Bridge Program are developed, supported, and taught by Southern Nazarene University faculty who also teach the traditional-aged students. Bridge is an educational course delivery system and not classified as a degree-completion program (SNU Catalog, 2003-2005).

Alternative and Prior Learning (APL) services are available to every adult student in attendance in one the adult degree-completion programs. These services include individualized assessment that encompasses the completion of a portfolio of life-learning experiences. Faculty members work closely with adult students to give personalized

instruction and guidance on the development of the learning portfolio. Once completed, the conduction of a formal review of the portfolio occurs by university faculty for the specific determination of academic credit potential. The completed life portfolio allows the student to challenge out of college coursework in elective and general education areas. The submission of a life-learning portfolio by an adult learner for a formal academic review, results in credits earned for knowledge equivalent to that which is learned by students taking college courses. Life portfolio content is measured in relation to what is taught in actual college courses and evaluated by faculty members in academic departments with specialization in that specific content area. The strength of this process is directly in proportion to the willingness of faculty to be involved with it and to appreciate the value of life learning.

Adult learners who seek graduate degrees find options in Education, Business, Psychology, and Religion. There is currently one non-traditional graduate degree program in Education. The Master of Arts in Educational Leadership is designed for teachers who desire to become educational administrators. There are two non-traditional graduate programs in Business. The first option is the Master of Science in Management degree proposed for individuals who are interested in the effective practice of management. The second option is the Master of Business Administration, which is professional in nature and emphasizes accounting,

finance, economics, communication, marketing, and the quantitative sciences.

There are two graduate degrees in psychology. The Master of Science in Counseling Psychology meets the State of Oklahoma's Licensed Professional Counselor credential. The Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy fulfills the academic licensing requirements for the Oklahoma Licensed Marital and Family Therapist credential. Both of these psychology programs share common core coursework.

The Master of Arts degree in Theology degree meets the needs of practicing ministers, ministerial students, and laypersons who are interested in reflective biblical, theological, and ministerial studies. The courses for this degree are offered in three different delivery format options. Those options include independent study with weeklong courses, independent study with weekly seminars, or the traditional semester course option. By considering and adapting to the learner's personal goals and needs, this is a highly flexible graduate program option. It is a continued effort in the Adult Studies department to provide adults access to higher educational opportunities within the context of the Southern Nazarene University mission.

### Adult Learning

#### Andragogy

The concept of andragogy is fused into the adult education language and practice. Andragogy is defined as

the "art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, 1970, p. 38). Andragogy is characterized by the following assumptions about learning and the adult learner: (a) experience is to be acknowledged and utilized as a valuable resource for learning, (b) there is an expectation that learners will move from dependency toward self-direction, (c) readiness to learn relates to developmental tasks and social roles, (d) internal factors such as self-esteem and achievement motivate rather than external factors, and (e) immediacy of application results in a more problem-centered approach to learning (Knowles, 1980, pp. 43-45). In 1990, Knowles added a sixth assumption stating that it is vital for adults to know why they are being required to learn content information (p. 57).

The andragogical model is described as a "process model, in comparison to the content models employed by most traditional educators" (Knowles, 1984, p. 117). In a traditional model, the instructor decides in advance what knowledge or skill needs to be taught and develops a plan for presenting logical units of this content (p. 117). In an adult educational setting, the andragogical instructor will prepare "in advance a set of procedures for involving the learners" (p. 117). The process model "is concerned with providing procedures and resources for helping learners acquire information and skills" (p. 117). This

process model included seven elements: (a) establishing a climate conducive to learning, (b) creating a mechanism for mutual planning, (c) diagnosing the needs for learning, (d) formulating program objectives to satisfy those needs, (e) designing learning experiences sequenced in terms of readiness, (f) using suitable techniques and materials, and (g) mutual measurement and re-diagnosis of needs between teacher and learners (pp. 116-117).

The mission of adult educators is understood in the context of three distinct sets of needs and goals. This consists of the needs and goals: of the individuals, the institution, and society (Knowles, 1980, p. 27). The adult educator enables the adult learner to attain the skills of self-directed learning and develop the appreciation that learning is a lifelong process (p. 28). This endeavor encompasses the maturation dimensions of the individual while working toward meeting the learner's motivational human needs with the inclusion of ultimately reaching self-actualization (pp. 29-29). The accomplishment of this is done in the conjunction with meeting the needs of the learning institution (pp. 33-35). This will ultimately result in the meeting of the goals and needs of society (p. 36). The analysis of prior experiences, exploration of fresh knowledge, the development of new ways to learn, and

the synthesis of past and present for immediate, personal application, characterizes adult learning for the adult learner.

### Real-Life Learning

Learning processes customarily used in formal structured educational learning environments diverge dramatically from the processes of real-life learning. The focus of the adult education field is shifting to adult learning. . . . Attention is presently being given to learning that is relevant to the living tasks of the individual--real-life learning" (Fellenz & Conti, 1989, p. vii). With real-life learning, attention is paid to the living tasks of adult learners rather than tasks dictated by formal education settings (p. 7). Real-life learning in for the adult learner is "distinct for each individual" (p. 4). Adult learning is practical learning for real-life situations. In real-life situations, the learner must adjust learning to the particular circumstances faced.

One of the major characteristics of adult learning is that it is often undertaken for immediate application in real-life situations. Such learning usually involves problem solving, reflection on experience, or planning for one of the numerous tasks or challenges of adult life. Thus the phrase "real-life learning" has been used to distinguish typical adult learning from the academic learning of formal situations that is usually spoken of as studying or educating. (p. 4)



Learning from common circumstances, occurrences, predicaments, and experiences is a course of action learners confront immeasurable times throughout life.

Adult Education examines the rewards of learning that is directly applicable to adult learners' lives as opposed to learning that is from teacher-directed curricula in formal educational setting. The design of Southern Nazarene University's adult degree-completion programs are intentional in appreciating the unique ways in which adults learn. The design also acknowledges the adult learner as "possessing, or acquiring, the knowledge and skill to learn effectively in whatever learning situation one encounters" (Smith, 1982, p. 19). This design appreciates all the ways that adult learner's are involved in self-directed learning.

#### Self-Directed Learning

A primary characteristic of adult learners is the ability to be self-directed in learning (Knowles, 1970, p. 26). There are at least two ways to describe self-directed learning (Knowles, 1998, p. 135). The first is describing self-directed learning as self-teaching in which learners have personal power over all mechanical facets and approaches of their learning processes. The second is contemplative self-directed learning where personal autonomy is involved with the "taking control of the goals and purposes of learning and assuming ownership of learning" (p. 135). There are several assumptions about self-

directed learners. First, as learners mature they become more self-directed (Knowles, 1975, p. 20). Secondly, self-directed learning values the learners' experiences as an important resource for learning (p. 20). Knowles' third assumption is that learners' learning experiences are used in solving their problems (p. 21). Another assumption is that self-directed learners are motivated internally (p. 21). This type of learning does not take place in isolation. Adult educators play a vital role in the learning transaction. "Their part in this process is that of helper, guide, encourager, consultant, and resource--not that of transmitter, disciplinarian, judge, and authority" (p. 37).

There are two key elements to successful self-directed learning. The first element is the use of a variety of techniques by the learner such as "specifying goals, identifying resources, implementing strategies, and evaluating progress" (Brookfield, 1986, p. 47). The second element is the internal change of consciousness that the learners experience and the "contemplative ways in which they can transform their personal and social worlds" (p. 47).

Self-directed learning is a process that is frequently associated with the field of Adult Education (Ghost Bear, 2001, p. 7). Learners are required to be self-directed in

meeting their specific learning goals and educational objectives in adult degree-completion programs. Learners carry the responsibility for their learning success due to the very nature of an accelerated educational delivery model. Learners acceptance of the challenge to participate in such a model are declaring a readiness to learn by agreeing to complete required assignments and readings autonomously in preparation for each scheduled class session.

### Transformational Learning

Adults desire to learn for a myriad of emotional, professional, social, and personal reasons. "It may be that the circumstances prompting this learning are external to the learner (job loss, divorce, bereavement), but the decision to learn is the learner's" (Brookfield, 1986, pp. 9-10). Transformational learning is "the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation, and action" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1). Transformative learning is the actual "process of construing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experiences as a guide to action" (Mezirow, 1994, pp. 223-224).

The concept of paradigm shift is helpful in understanding the nature of transformative learning. The learner's "paradigm is the system of assumptions,

perceptions, expectations, feelings, beliefs, and values that are organized to understand a wide range of situations and events (Lively, 2001, p. 240). "Paradigms are intangible and internal, but permeate everything concrete and external. They emerge out of the recurrent experiences of life and the parallel needs for psychological coherence and a manageable self-concept" (O'Connor & Wolf, 1991, p. 326). If change is to take place in an adult learner's life, it is essential that "basic paradigms must be examined and challenged" (Lively, 2001, p. 240). This process is central to transformative learning.

Transformative learning theory comes to life through the words that learners use to describe the reasons that decisions are made to attend school and through their expression of how an area of study changed the direction of their lives. It is through the avenue of critical reflection that learners can examine their life in light of new knowledge, insight, and understanding. Critical reflection encourages self-evaluation, and it is "through educational encounters, learners come to appreciate that values, beliefs, behaviors, and ideologies are culturally transmitted and that they are provisional and relative" (Brookfield, 1986, p. 10). This opportunity to critically reflect and re-evaluate life experience in the context of a higher educational experience can provide numerous rewards

for Southern Nazarene University adult learners. One way of capturing the learners' perspective in any exploration is through the use of naturalistic inquiry.

## Chapter 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Design

This naturalistic study employed a descriptive research design to investigate adult learners' perceptions of their experience in the educational experience in the Southern Nazarene University (SNU) Adult Studies program as it relates to the university mission. Such a naturalistic position is one of discovery and understanding in search for truth (Guba, 1978, p. 13). A descriptive study tests assumptions or answers questions concerning participants' current status, and it reports "the way things are" (Gay, 1987, p. 11). In addition, this design is "generally asking questions that have not been asked before" (p. 11). In order to explore SNU adult learners' perceptions of their learning experience in light of the university mission, questions that have not been asked before were addressed in order to understand university mission in the context of adult learners' needs and expectations.

#### Sample

A population of an investigative study is an entire group of persons, things, or events, which have at least one single trait in common (Sprinthall, 2000, p. 130). The target population for this study was adults who are

participating in or have completed a SNU Adult Studies program.

Qualitative sampling focuses in-depth on relatively small samples and concerns itself with information-richness (Patton, 1990, p. 169). This study utilized a purposive sample. The purposive sample consists of participants who are knowledgeable about the topic and provide an "overall sense of meaning of concept, theme, or process" being studied (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In naturalistic inquiry, often a purposive sampling provides rich information and illumination (Patton, 1980, p. 169). "Purposive sample is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore, one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most" (Merriam, 1988, p. 48).

No particular adult studies program was singled out for investigation. Learners in all of SNU's Adult Studies undergraduate programs were eligible to participate in this study. Adult Studies program directors and instructors were asked to recommend participants for this study. Participants selected were conversational informants who were available, knowledgeable, willing to talk, and represented a wide range of opinions.

#### Procedures

This study encompassed a descriptive research design and used naturalistic inquiry methods with the use of multiple means of collecting data; this process is referred

to as triangulation. Triangulation tests one source of data against the other in order to validate the findings (Guba, 1978 p. 13; Patton, 1990, p. 244). Data collected was from focus groups, one-on-one interviews, telephone interviews, and written responses from participants. One-on-one interviews and telephone interviews were conducted as needed in order to probe for information that was more specific than that gained in the focus group. The use of two on-going peer debriefing relationships provided critical research study monitoring. Learner reflection papers were instrumental to the confirmation of focus group participant perceptions.

Once potential participants were identified for the study, each participant was contacted in person by telephone or by e-mail. Adult Studies classrooms were utilized in both Tulsa and Oklahoma City for the conduction of the focus groups. Six tape recorders were set up in the classroom for each focus group in an effort to capture all participant comments. All participants completed consent forms prior to the beginning of the focus group.

A focus group provides data collection through group interaction on a given topic (Morgan 1997, p. 6). The focus group process provided time for the interviewer to record observations and opportunity to explore all interview content related to the purpose of the study. Each focus group lasted for one hour in order to be respectful of the participants' time. For all four focus groups, one



additional person was invited as an observer to sit in during the focus groups and record written personal observations. These recorded observations and the resultant dialogue were instrumental to the overall research study and theme development process. They confirmed observations, provided additional perspective, and collaborated emerging themes. Forty-six learners from the School of Adult Studies programs participated in a total of four focus groups, two one-on-one interviews, and two telephone interviews. The one-on-one interviews and telephone interviews also provided opportunity for focus group content member checks. Four selected participants who could not actually attend the four focus groups voluntarily submitted written responses to the printed Interview Question Guide questions. These participants wanted to contribute in some way to the research study. Four focus group participants also submitted written responses to the interview questions in addition to their participation in the focus group. Two of these participants indicated that perhaps they were unable to express their thoughts as completely during the actual focus group. Others simply had written down their responses prior to the focus group experience and the interviewer invited them to leave the information they had prepared. The use of open-ended questions and conversational style allowed for the collection of exact words of the participants. All focus groups and interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. All participants' transcribed and

written responses were combined into a table identifying specific emerging themes.

In addition to the data collected from the focus groups and interviews, other means of data collection were conducted. In conjunction with data collection through focus groups, one-on-one interviews, telephone interviews, written responses, and a document analysis of learner produced program "reflections papers" provided additional confirmation of what was communicated by study participants. At the conclusion of the program, adult learners provide in their own words insight into their educational experience with Southern Nazarene University through written program reflections papers. These papers directly relate to their personal perception of the adult studies educational experience with emphasis on the educational processes, program strengths, program weaknesses, instructors, modules, and cohort group experience.

The analysis of "data is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 112). Coding is a system for grouping the participants' responses because "the data must be reduced into the boundaries of the study" (Lively, 2001, p. 54). As the data analysis progressed, categories began to link together to form overarching themes (p. 55). The data analysis ended when the overarching themes were identified and when those themes could be placed "in the context of broader theory and

answered the question, 'So what?'' (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 256). A peer debriefing relationship was established with two qualitative researchers who hold the Doctor of Education degree in the field of Occupational and Adult Education. Both qualitative researchers hold program leadership positions in adult education programs and provide collectively twenty-five years of experience in adult education. These researchers participated in every phase of the research study, including the coding process in an effort to assist with emerging theme development, and to control bias. The conduction of peer debriefing meetings took place after each focus group and was on going throughout the research study. The final step in the research study was a presentation of the preliminary findings to the Adult Studies Dean and Program Directors. This meeting consisted of ten Adult Studies Program Directors, two Adult Studies faculty members, and the Adult Studies Dean and was one hour in length.

#### The Researcher in Context

Descriptive studies take place within a particular context, and their purpose is to describe elements within a specific setting. To accomplish this in naturalistic inquiry,

the researcher must be sensitive to the context and all the variables within it including the physical setting, the people, the overt and covert agendas, and the nonverbal behavior. One also needs to be

sensitive to the information being gathered  
(Merriam, 1988, p. 38).

In the collection of research data through qualitative means, "one of the cardinal principles of qualitative methods is the importance of background and context to the processes of understanding and interpreting data" (Patton, 1980, p. 9). It is, therefore, necessary to understand the researcher's background and context in this study.

Given that the researcher in a qualitative study is the primary data collection instrument of a research project (Guba, 1978; Merriam, 1988, p. 19, 36; Patton, 1983, p. 22), an awareness of the relationship of the researcher to the context of the study is critical. "Data are mediated through this human instrument. . . . The researcher as instrument is responsive to the context; he or she can adapt techniques to the circumstances; the total context can be considered" (Merriam, 1988, p. 19). Qualitative aspects of research data collection necessitate

that the evaluator get close to the people and situations being studied in order to understand the minutiae of the program life. The evaluator gets close to the program through physical proximity for a period of time, as well as through development of closeness in the social sense of intimacy and confidentiality (Patton, 1983, p. 43).

Therefore, since "the evaluator using qualitative methods attempts to understand the setting under study through direct

personal contact and experience with the program" (p. 41), it is crucial that there be a "specification of the role of the researcher in conducting the evaluation" (p. 43).

The design of this study takes into account and is made possible by the fact that the researcher has been a part of the Church of the Nazarene since childhood. An un-churched family of origin was invited to attend a revival at the Church of the Nazarene in Walters, Oklahoma in 1968. This began a relationship with a loving extended church family that continues to this day.

My higher educational experience and professional career have also been directly connected to the Church of the Nazarene. I graduated from Southern Nazarene University in Bethany, Oklahoma, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1981. I worked part-time as a student in various capacities on the SNU campus from 1977 until I graduated in 1981. Once I graduated and while I attended graduate school, I continued to work on the SNU campus under 10 month contracts.

In August of 1983, I began to work full-time as Associate Director of Admissions at SNU in the traditional student admissions program. In the spring semester of 1988, I became an adjunct faculty member in the SNU Psychology Department and was assigned various teaching responsibilities. I concluded my 5-year involvement with

traditional student admissions in the summer of 1988 when I began my career with the School of Adult Studies as an Admissions Counselor in the Office of Admissions in the non-traditional Adult Studies program. In the summer of 1989, I became an Academic Advisor with the SNU School of Adult Studies Assessment and Prior Learning Program. This program allows students to document life learning through a structured life portfolio in order for academic credit to be considered through a formal evaluative process. In July of 1995, I became the Program Director for one of the SNU Adult Studies programs, Family Studies and Gerontology Program. This also provided me full-time faculty status with the rank of Assistant Professor. The responsibilities for this position include curriculum development, faculty development, program planning and assessment, teaching assignments, and student assessment.

My extensive experience with the Church of the Nazarene, Southern Nazarene University, and the SNU School of Adult Studies provides me an understanding of Nazarene culture, SNU higher education, SNU Adult Studies programs, and a keen interest in the adult learner. I have a long-time history with the Nazarene community, I am immersed in the day-to-day operations of the SNU educational institution, and by design, my work brings me face-to-face with adult learners from their

very first day as students through their very last day as students.

### Data Collection Techniques

When considering specific data collection techniques in naturalistic inquiry, it must be noted that qualitative interviewing emphasizes "the active participation of the interviewer and the importance of giving the interviewee voice" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 31). Qualitative interviewing is an interpretive approach. It recognizes that "meaning emerges through interaction" and "emphasizes the importance of understanding the overall text of a conversation, and more broadly the importance of seeing meaning in context" (p. 31).

A typical qualitative interview is an interview session that is somewhat "unstructured and open-ended" (Gay, 1996, p. 224). In naturalistic research the interview takes on more of the form of a dialogue or an interaction (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 85). The primary emphasis of the interview is not to obtain responses to a "predetermined set of standardized questions" but rather to find out where the participant is coming from and what has been experienced, believed, felt, and/or perceived (Gay, 1996, p. 224). Interviews assist the "researcher to understand and put into a larger context

the interpersonal, social, and cultural aspect of the environment" (Erlandson, Haris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 85). Understanding the context is crucial since "qualitative research lives and breathes through seeing the context; it is the particularities that produce the generalities, not the reverse" (Miles & Heberman, 1994, p. 35). For the purposes of this study, the two data collection techniques that were incorporated were the focus group and the one-on-one interview "on the recognition that these are both interview methods" (Morgan, 1997, p. 22).

The use of focus groups was one method of investigating the perceptions of adult learners' educational experiences in the Adult Studies programs at SNU as it relates to mission. Focus groups are interviews which are considered to be a form of evaluation in which a group of people are brought together to discuss and share impressions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 27). Focus groups are not simply an expedient way to collect specific knowledge from the participants. Focus groups "give rise synergistically to insights and solutions that would not come about without them" (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989, p. 40). The purpose in most qualitative interviewing is to "obtain depth and detail from individuals" (p. 40). In addition to this, the goal of focus groups is to allow



people to "spark off of one another, suggesting dimensions and nuances" perhaps not presented by "any one individual" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 140). It is during the discussion of the group that at times a totally different understanding emerges (p. 140).

The one-on-one interview sessions provided an opportunity for the researcher to "acquire data not obtainable in any other way" (Gay, 1996, p. 223). For this type of information, the one-on-one interview was utilized (Morgan, 1997, p. 15). There were times that information could not be attained through the focus groups because of the mere constraints of a given time frame or the comfort level of the participant. The one-on-one interviews provided an occasion for further inquiry to explore, illuminate, and clarify with more depth on the perspective of an individual participant (p. 223). More frequently, the "trust and interest needed for an in-depth interview grow as part of an on-going relationship" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 143).

There are some basic comparisons that can be made between focus groups and one-on-one interviews. Focus groups provide an opportunity "to observe interaction on a topic" and "provide direct evidence about similarities and difference in the participants' opinions and experiences as

opposed to reaching such conclusions from post hoc analysis of separate statements from each interviewee" (Morgan, 1997, p. 10). The individual one-on-one interview permitted the researcher to have greater control in the interview while allowing the participant more time to provide greater "depth and detail" in response which provides the possibility "to gain an in-depth understanding" (pp. 10-11). There is essentially "closer communication between interviewer and informant" with the use of "more subtle cues to control" conversation in the one-on-one interview unlike "what is necessary to guide a group discussion" (pp. 10-11).

Focus groups and individual interviewing are two data collection techniques that complemented each other in many ways. The implementation of "focus groups or individual interviews can enhance projects that are based primarily on the other method" (Morgan, 1997, p. 22). One "way to combine focus groups with individual interviews is to conduct one as a follow-up to the other" (p. 23). When integrating the use of both data collection techniques, "the single most important way that either individual or group interviews can contribute to a project built around the other method is in devising the interview schedule" (p. 22). One basic way for their combined use is to initially

utilize focus groups "to reveal the range of the future informants' thoughts and experiences prior to the first individual interview" (p. 22). Incorporating follow-up individual one-on-one interviews can "help provide depth and detail on topics that were only broadly discussed in group interviews" (p. 23). In addition the one-on-one interviews also provide opportunity "to learn more about any perspectives that may have been underrepresented in the groups" (p. 23). In reality, either technique can be used in "a preliminary or follow-up capacity with the other" (p. 23). For the purpose of this study, logistically, tracking down individuals for a follow-up one-on-one interview was simply "more practical" (p. 23). The primary emphasis kept in focus was "that the goal of combining research methods is to strengthen the total research project" (p. 23).

Indeed, the use of focus groups provided a "useful starting point for individual interviews that involve unfamiliar topics or informants" (Morgan, 1997, p. 22). With the addition of the one-on-one interview with selected individuals from the focus groups, there was greater potential for trust and interest to evolve. The one-on-one interview was utilized as needed to provide additional information and rich detail. Furthermore, one-on-one interviews and telephone interviews were used as member

checks, which complemented the study while building study credibility.

### Objectivity

In qualitative research "the naturalistic paradigm affirms the mutual influence that researcher and respondents have on each other" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 15). It is established that formal methods can never be "allowed to separate the researcher from the human interaction that is the heart of the research" (p. 15). The researcher is required to be involved in order to get to the pertinent matters. "The dangers of bias and reactivity are great; the dangers of being insulated from relevant data are greater" (p. 15). Although it is instrumental for the researcher to "find ways to control biases that do not inhibit the flow of pertinent information", it is also mandatory to remember that "relevance cannot be sacrificed for the sake of rigor" (p. 15). Two specific techniques were built into the design of this study that assisted with objectivity. The two selected techniques are peer debriefing and member checks.

In this qualitative research study, data analysis was continuous, beginning with the very first focus group. The peer debriefing process was on going throughout the study.

The peer debriefing technique is:

The process of engaging, with a disinterested peer in extended and extensive discussions of one's findings, conclusions, tentative analyses, and, occasionally, field stresses, the purpose of which is both "testing out" the findings with someone who has no contractual interest in the situation and also helping to make propositional that tacit and implicit information that the evaluator might possess. (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 237)

Two qualitative researchers were identified specifically that agreed to participate in a "confidential, professional" peer debriefing relationship throughout the duration of this study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 237). The selected researchers brought expertise in qualitative research, adult education, Christian higher education, Southern Nazarene University, and Adult Studies students and programs. In order to maintain objectivity in this study agreements were made with these two researchers to engage in "extended and extensive discussions" (p. 237). These discussions included such topics as research methods, processes, conclusions, findings, the tentative analysis of the "tacit and implicit information" gleaned, theme emergence, levels of abstraction in data analysis, and the implication of the researcher's values and biases on the study (p. 237). In addition to the inclusion of peer

debriefing in the study, member checks were incorporated continuously.

Member checks are the "process of testing hypotheses, data, preliminary categories, and interpretations with members of the stakeholder groups from whom the original constructions were collected" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, pp. 238-239). In order to "establish that the multiple realities he or she presents are those that the stakeholders have provided, the most certain test is verifying those multiple constructions with those who provided them" (p. 239). This technique alone "is the single most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 239). Member checks can be done formally or informally and with individuals or small groups providing an opportunity for participants to elaborate, react, respond, and verify the researcher's interpretation of what was communicated through the original interview process (p. 239). This process provides the researcher an initial opportunity to analyze, assess, clarify, and summarize an interview as well as providing a "first step toward analysis" (p. 239). For the purpose of this study, "knowledgeable and articulate" individuals from the focus groups were asked to participate in one-on-one member check interviews to assist with verifying that the information

collected conforms to what was communicated by the focus group (pp. 239-241). The focus group questions and one-on-one interview questions related directly to the study's identified research questions.

### Interview Questions

There were many decisions that were made with consideration to an interview strategy and the design of specific interview questions. The essential "purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else's mind" and to allow the researcher "to enter into the other person's perspective" (Patton, 1990, p. 278). In qualitative research "interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (p. 278). The primary "task for the interviewer is to make it possible for the person being interviewed, to bring the interviewer into his or her world" (p. 279). It was the purpose of the researcher to obtain "high-quality evaluative information" from talking with the adult learners, who could provide information on the impact of the Southern Nazarene University School of Adult Studies program on university mission. This was accomplished through the utilization of an interview guide approach strategy utilizing a prefatory statement with open-ended questions in the interview.

The interview guide is a list of prepared possible questions "to be explored in the course of an interview" (Patton, 1990, p. 283). The suggested questions on the interview guide provided some overall consistency to the interview process and direction in the approach to "the topics and their sequence in the interview" (Kvale, 1996, p. 129). Yet, this strategy allowed the interviewer to "explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject" (Patton, 1990, p. 283). It provided the advantage of the interviewer being able to decide how "best to use the limited time available in an interview situation" while making the process more "systematic and comprehensive by delimiting in advance the issues to be explored" (p. 283). This strategy incorporated several basic questions while, "permitting the interviewer more flexibility in probing and more decision-making flexibility" in the interview permitting the participants to "respond in their own words to express their own perspectives" (p. 287). The interview guide questions were organized in four primary research question areas. It was up to the researcher's "judgment and tact" as to how closely the question guide was followed (Kvale, 1996, p. 129). Questions from the interview guide were selected based on "relevance for the research theme and



dynamically with regard to the interpersonal relationship in the interview" (p. 129). The questions were set up with a "brief explanation about the nature of the question areas" (St. Pierre, 1996, p. 64).

A prefatory statement's purpose is "to let the person being interviewed know what is going to be asked before it is asked" (Patton, 1990, p. 321). The prefatory statement served two functions. The first function alerted the "interviewees to the nature of the question that is coming, it directs their awareness, and it focuses their attention" (p. 321). The second function provided "an introductory announcement about subject matter about to be broached" giving "respondents a few seconds to organize their thoughts before the question is actually asked" (p. 321). One type of prefatory statement included "a quotation" selected from "another source that contains ideas on which you wish your respondent to comment" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 69). One prefatory statement used with this study was introduced prior to questioning related to the second research area. This prefatory statement incorporated the SNU mission statement for the purpose of awareness and emphasis and to allow for the collection of participant thoughts.

The clarity of the questions used in the interview "is the responsibility of the interviewer" (Patton, 1990, p. 309). Questions used in qualitative inquiry are to be "open-ended, neutral, singular, and clear" (p. 295). In qualitative interviewing the driving force "is to minimize the imposition of predetermined responses when gathering data" (p. 295). The use of open-ended questions in an interview permits "respondents to respond in their own words" from their "own repertoire of possible responses" and "to take whatever direction and use whatever words they want in order to represent what they have to say" (pp. 295-296). To accomplish this, copies of the prefatory statement containing the Southern Nazarene University mission statement were given to each participant and the statement was read to them. In addition, interview questions were utilized with focus groups and one-on-one interviews to gather data. The focus group questions and one-on-one interview follow-up questions were related to each of the study's four research questions.

The first prefatory statement was read in order to specifically acquaint the participants to the specific topical focus of the interview questions. This prefatory statement established the foundation for the interview questions. It was read prior to the beginning of the

interview. The second prefatory statement was read at the conclusion of the first cluster of questions addressed in each focus group. The second prefatory statement highlighted the university mission providing a specific reference for participants. The initial interview guide questions were developed and piloted to assure clarity of the questions. Based on the pilot test with other adult studies students, modification to the questions was completed prior to focus group use.

### Interview Question Guide

#### Prefatory Statement:

The purpose of this study is to describe the perceptions of adult learners who are participating in degree-completion programs at Southern Nazarene University of their educational experience as it relates to the mission of the university. The focus will be on describing the influences, factors, and qualities of the educational experience perceived by the student, and this will be related to the university mission.

#### Research Question Number 1:

What do adult learners consider to be the university mission in the educational experience?

#### Focus Group Questions:

1. Should a Christian university have a mission statement? If so, why?
2. In your opinion, what should a mission statement do?
3. In your perception, what appears to be important to SNU?
4. From your experience with SNU what do you think is the university mission of SNU?

5. How well do you think that you understand the SNU mission?

One-on-One Interview Questions:

1. If you were to write a mission statement for a Christian educational institution, what are some of the things that you would include?
2. As you look back at the SNU mission statement, what are some of the points that you agree with?
3. As you look back at the SNU mission statement, what (if anything) is lacking?

Prefatory Statement:

The mission of Southern Nazarene University is to educate:

Students for responsible Christian living within the contexts of the liberal arts, selected professional and graduate studies, a Wesleyan-holiness theological perspective, and a cross-cultural community life. Through its primary relationship to the Church of the Nazarene in the South Central Region of the USA, the university is the church at work in higher education integrating faith, learning, and life. (SNU Undergraduate Catalog, 2003-2005, p. 6)

Research Question Number 2:

How do adult learners encounter university mission through educational experience?

Focus Group Questions:

1. If you have seen the SNU mission statement in print previously, where have you seen it?
2. What parts of the SNU mission statement do you perceive that you have experienced during your educational experience? Describe a situation to illustrate.
3. What parts of the mission statement have been absent from your educational experience at SNU? Describe a situation to illustrate.
4. How is SNU addressing the university mission in the adult degree-completion educational experience?

One-on-One Interview Questions:

1. What does it mean to you to encounter the SNU mission through your educational experience?
2. How did you experience SNU mission through your educational experience at SNU? Provide examples to illustrate.

Research Question Number 3:

What are perceptions of the adult learners regarding the importance of the university mission to the SNU educational experience?

Focus Group Questions:

1. How should SNU's mission integrate with your educational experience?
2. What is your opinion about SNU's mission in your educational experience?
3. How did your previous educational experience compare to your educational experience with SNU?
4. What would you tell other students attending or considering attending a SNU adult degree-completion program?
5. What one thing would you most like to tell the SNU faculty, administration, staff, board, and other personnel about SNU's mission in the adult degree-completion program?

One-on-One Interview Questions:

1. Do you think that the SNU mission should impact your educational experience in a way that is different from what you have experienced?
2. From your perspective as a student, do you think that as a university that the university places a high value on the SNU mission? How do you think that you know this?
3. What does it really mean to you to be earning your degree from Southern Nazarene University?
4. As a result of attaining a degree from SNU what should a SNU graduate be like?

#### Research Question Number 4:

How important is the SNU university mission to learning?

##### Focus Group Questions:

1. Is mission important to learning?
2. In your opinion does SNU's mission impact learning? Please explain.
3. Are there ways that university mission can impact a person's ability to learn? Please illustrate.
4. Are there ways that university mission can impact a person's opportunity to learn? Please illustrate.

##### One-on-One Interview Questions:

1. Based on your personal experience at SNU in what ways can mission impact learning?
2. What should SNU know about mission and learning?

#### The Translation of Research to Reality

The ability to transfer research to real-world practice is frequently not readily available within the world of higher education. To a great extent "formal knowledge in a profession is often generated from basic and applied research which is usually conducted in university and other settings which do not readily transfer themselves to real-world situations" (Linkenbach, 1995, p. 125). To truly be a learning organization, the organization must be an institution that practices reflective practice.

Reflective practice transpires when people use "reflection on their patterns of action, on the situations in which they are performing, and on the know-how implicit in their performance" (Schon, 1983, p. 61). This practice seeks to accommodate "reflection-in-action" (p. 338). Reflection-in-action is "reflection on phenomena and on one's spontaneous ways of thinking and acting, undertaken in the midst of action to guide further action" (Schon, 1988, p. 2). Thus, the "reflective institution must place a high priority on flexible procedures, differentiated responses, qualitative appreciation of complex processes, and decentralized responsibility for judgment and action" in addition to the fact that it "must make a place for attention to conflicting values and purposes" (Schon, 1983, p. 338).

#### Reflection-in-Action Stage

A reflection-in-action stage can be incorporated into research studies. One such study that can provide model for this is the study of The Montana Alcohol Servers by Linkenbach (1995). In this study, the researcher chose to conduct meetings with the consumers of his research that resulted in a demonstration of reflective professional practice as a "problem solving process" (p. 127). The

purposeful choice to include the consumers of his research in his study brought the opportunity for practical, consequential, and immediate real-world implications in a very systematic and logical approach.

Linkenbach's (1995) approach incorporated three stages. The first stage consisted of "both quantitative (mail surveys) and qualitative (personal interviews) data collection and analysis" for assessment purposes (p. 112). The second stage involved the use of a modified Delphi process in order to rate and therefore help prioritize "issues identified in the first phase of this study" for training and resource recommendations (p. 121). In the third collaborative stage, meetings were conducted in order to "translate the findings of Phase 1 and the ratings of Phase 2 into more meaningful and useful form for future action" (p. 126).

This third and final stage of the Linkenbach study involved two collaborative meetings between the researcher and the consumers of his research. With the addition of the third stage, the research findings were no longer research for research's sake. but "the outcome of this project was the active transferring of the research knowledge into useful practical information" (Linkenbach, 1995, p. 121). This process ultimately allowed for the



translation of study findings into "specific recommendations" for "useful training approaches and materials" (p. xi). In the first meeting the researcher explained "in detail the findings" with the primary objective being to plan a future second meeting with the consumers of his research in order to actual work to transfer "the research knowledge into useful practical information" (p. 127). At the conclusion of this final stage, the study "moved from obtaining information to reflecting upon this information to then acting upon the information—the process of praxis" (p. 127).

People were the heart of the Linkenbach approach. The Linkenbach study "started with people and their needs and then kept the people at the center of the entire process" (Linkenbach, 1995, p. 127). This course of action "asked a different set and type of questions from the research" and resulted in "significantly different conclusions from the research" (127). In a reflection-in-action approach, "the research was conducted and its conclusions were applied" in a real-world setting (p. 127). This approach "viewed knowledge as constantly developing and supported attempts to experiment with that knowledge" (p. 127).

A reflection-in-action stage was incorporated in this study of the perception of adult learners at SNU concerning

the mission of the university. The results of this study addressing the perceptions of adult learners' educational experiences in the Adult Studies programs at SNU as it relates to mission may have important implications for the university. The SNU study is similar to Linkenbach's study in the fact that people remained at the heart of this study. Indeed, this study became a part of "a shared learning experience and a celebration of the joy that comes when people communicate meaning on the deepest personal level (Thorpe, 1996, p. xiii).

This study differed from Linkenbach's study in that the findings from the SNU study directly dictated the nature of additional actions that will need to occur in the form of additional collaborative meetings. Therefore, a modified final reflective-in-action stage was incorporated as part of the study. While the Linkenbach approach featured two meetings in its final stage, the final stage of this SNU study incorporated one official meeting with the SNU Adult Studies Dean and Program Directors. At this meeting, the preliminary study findings were reported, with the stipulation that additional follow-up meetings would occur as determined by program leadership. The SNU Adult Studies Dean and Program Directors are responsible for primary leadership for the Adult Studies programs and will

determine the implications of study findings for the Adult Studies programs.

The final reflection-in-action stage for the current study had two purposes. The first purpose of this meeting was to explain in detail the purpose and findings of the study from all interviews. It took place at the conclusion of all focus groups and one-on-one interviews. A second purpose of the meeting was to invite collaboration on the possible implications of the findings for the university. The addition of this stage involved SNU Adult Studies decision-makers in the research process while providing for them an opportunity to benefit from reflection-in-action with exposure to current research findings with possible immediate Adult Studies program implications.

Southern Nazarene University now has available current research findings that can be utilized in future decision-making. These research study findings can provide timely information in the midst Adult Studies program examination. In reality, reflection-in-action can be a very valuable step for an organization but at the same time it also can be "a threat to organizational stability" (Schon, 1983, p. 338). Reflective practice can be revolutionary to the organization conducive to the required examination and potential restructuring opportunities, provided that it is

"capable of sustaining this tension" (p. 338). At this point, Adult Studies program leadership has complete control in the direction of any future implications for this study and Southern Nazarene University Adult Studies programs.

## Chapter 4

### FINDINGS

#### Introduction

To explore Southern Nazarene University Adult Studies student perception of university mission in light of need, expectation, and experience, students participated in focus groups, interviews, and written responses. Adult Studies students were asked to describe: (a) their perceptions of the university mission in the educational experience; (b) their encounters with the university mission through the educational experience; (c) their perceptions of the importance of the university mission to the educational experience; and (d) the importance of the mission to learning in their educational experience. Participants represented all undergraduate degree-completion programs and were in various stages of program progress, which range from relatively new students in the second module to those recently awarded a diploma with the attainment of the bachelor of science degree.

The clear recognition of the adult student as the consumer in the Southern Nazarene University Adult Studies program is important to the identification of educational

market and program emphasis. Consequently, it is vital that there is a steady communication with the adult studies consumer, "probing and listening" for their thoughts, desires, and needs (Tracy, 2002, p. 62). As adult students are understood more accurately, as consumers, the likelihood increases that their expectations will be met, and the less anxious an institution will have to be concerning higher education competition (p. 64). What is good for the adult student and the profitability of the programs "are not exclusive notions" but intricately linked (p.35). The findings from this study relate to educational market, program emphasis, and expectation.

#### Participant Profile

The purposeful selection of the 46 participants of this study was due to their status as students in the Adult Studies programs. All participants were either current students, who were representative of all phases of the educational process, or recent graduates. Adult Studies Program Directors and instructors recommended focus group participants considered able to provide resonant information with the ability to articulate and participate comfortably in a small group setting.

The 46 participants included females and males. This group is fairly representative of the overall Adult Studies program population, with approximately two thirds of the population being female. This compares to the Adult Studies program population that is 60% female and 40% male (SNU Admissions and Marketing Report, 2003, p. 2).

Minority participation in the study was diverse and fairly consistent with Adult Studies program minority participation. Based on biographical data, 22% of study participants were of minority descent, with representation from the African American, Native American, Hispanic, and Asian population. (See Table 1) This compares to the Adult Studies program population with 15% African American, 8% Native American, 6% Hispanic, and 1% Asian (p. 3). The average age of the study participants (See Table 1) is comparable to the Adult Studies program, where the adult learner's average age is 36 years (p. 2).

Adult Studies program representation included participants from the Oklahoma City campus and from the Tulsa campus. Of the total focus group participants, there was representation across all Adult Studies programs. This included the programs of Family Studies and Gerontology, Network Management, Nursing, and Organizational Leadership. Self-identified religious background of participants

consisted of Protestants, with several Protestants known specifically as Nazarene, Catholics, and those participants who acknowledged no religious background or church affiliation. (See Table 2)

**Table 1: Consolidated Participant Demographics**

Variables	Number	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	15	33%
Female	31	67%
<b>Age</b>		
25-30	11	24%
31-39	13	28%
40-49	13	28%
50-over	9	20%
<b>Race</b>		
Caucasian	36	78%
African American	5	11%
Native America	3	07%
Hispanic	1	02%
Asian	1	02%
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>		
Protestant	35	76%
Nazarene	6	13%
Catholic	2	04%
None	9	20%
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	33	72%
Single	13	28%

**Table 2: Program Specific Demographics**

Participants by Program	FSG-OKC	FSG-Tulsa	OL-OKC	OL-Tulsa	Network Management-OKC	Nursing-OKC
<b>Number</b>	8	11	6	9	7	5
<b>Mean Age</b>	45	37	41	37	38	40
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	3	2	2	4	4	0
Female	5	9	4	5	3	5
<b>Race</b>						
Caucasian	6	7	6	7	7	3
African American	0	3	0	2	0	0
Native American	2	0	0		0	1
Hispanic	0	0	0	0	0	1
Asian	0	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>						
Protestant	8	6	4	8	6	5
Nazarene	2	0	1	1	2	0
Catholic	0	1	0	0	1	0
None	0	4	2	1	0	0
<b>Marital Status</b>						
Married	6	5	6	6	6	4
Single	2	6	0	3	1	1



The participant responses were conceptualized around 3 primary themes and 11 secondary themes. The primary themes were mission exposure, mission encounter and integration, and mission consistency. The secondary themes were initial mission exposure, decision-making, basic assumptions, instructors, the Biblical perspectives module, classroom environment, voice, cohort group, cultural diversity, deficits, and meaning perspectives. The primary theme of mission exposure included three secondary themes which were initial experiences, decision-making, and basic assumptions.

#### Mission Exposure: A Clear Understanding

##### Initial Exposure

The first part of the focus group discussion involved focus group questions related to the participants' perception of the purpose of an organizational mission in general and followed with questions related to the participants' perceived comprehension of the Southern Nazarene University (SNU) mission. These questions provided a discussion-starter opportunity in an effort to focus the topic and provided an opportunity for most participants to provide an initial perspective (Morgan, 1997, pp. 49-50). This also allowed the occasion to emphasize the importance of the individual contribution of

all participants (p. 49). Generally, all participants stated that they understood the purpose of an organizational mission and perceived that they understood the SNU mission prior to the actual presentation of the printed mission to the focus group.

When asked initially about exposure to the SNU mission, the participants' answers were consistent. Most of them could not recall where they learned of the mission specifically. The majority of the participants responded that they have very limited exposure to the mission in print, Internet web format, or any other media. Often, the dissemination of simple factual information is important to adult learners and is "often an important way to address misconceptions" (Wlodkowski, 1999, p. 200). Three participants remembered exposure at either an information meeting as part of a power-point presentation or at educational information fair. There appeared to be some emphasis given to the university mission at the introduction of the first module in one of the Adult Studies programs, but it was neither consistent nor typical across all programs.

One of the most meaningful ways to distinguish SNU from all other higher education competition is "to do an outstanding job with information" (Gates, 1999, p. 3).

There are more people "seeking advanced education more frequently in their lives than every before" (Pittinsky, 2003, p. 9). The availability of information is critical in order for adult students to evaluate efficiently higher educational options with result in an improved quality higher educational decision (Knowles, 1988, p. 202). In an information driven world, this does suggest one additional key piece of information that prospective students could utilize for informed educational decision-making, which is ready access to the SNU mission.

Access to the SNU mission is tenuous at best for adult prospective learners in search of program information for decision-making purposes. Participants in this study voiced perceptions that indicated inconsistent access to the SNU mission. For example, one participant was adamant when he stated, "I'm now in graduate school, and I have not seen it." Another participant stressed, "If it was provided to me, I did not read it" while another participant stated with certainty that it was available at an "orientation information meeting with a program representative in admission."

#### Decision-Making

There was agreement that exposure to the university mission would be helpful in decision-making for some

prospective students. Adult learners are decision-making individuals and are responsible for the decisions they make (Day, 1988, p. 124). The acknowledgement of the adult learner's choice to participate in an educational learning opportunity "cannot be viewed in isolation" nor out of the context of the adult learner's life (p. 124). In that decision there is implications for what may be learned, for the feeling about what is learned, and for how the adult learner responds (p. 124). Participants in the study voiced the importance of mission as it relates to decision-making. For the adult learner the university mission provided key information that would allow informed consent by the learner in order to choose association with the institution based on perceived mission agreement. For example, one participant communicated this when referring to students seeking information about educational options. The participant stated,

I think by having a printed mission statement it allows the individual to make in informed consent on his influence to be a part of that institution. (OKC Campus Participant)

Another participant declared the position about the beforehand availability of SNU mission information to prospective students, with this statement:

I have personally rejected participation and affiliation with groups that did not have a

mission statement, had an ill-planned mission statement, or whose mission, as stated, was not in-sync with my own plans or desires. (OKC Campus Participant)

Although participants did express the perception that prospective adult learners deserved access to the SNU mission statement for educational decision-making purposes, the SNU mission became even more important to the adult learner once committed to attend the university. The Southern Nazarene University name had already acted as a guidepost to adult learners specifically looking for an educational experience with a Christian university. Basic assumptions aligned adult learners with the university based on the name of the university and its association as a Christian university.

#### Basic Assumptions

Most students did not speak to the importance of mission prior to entering the program but indicated more interest in mission after enrollment as they became more acquainted with the university. As one OKC participant put it, the name of the university, SNU, had already acted as "a beacon to like-minded individuals, to anyone thinking of participation" in a Christian university since it is apparently affiliated with a Christian church and represents a unique culture. Assumptions made about the

school's culture, which can be based on the name of the university alone as with SNU, can imply the alignment of "commonly held values, attitudes, and beliefs" of the participants with that of the university (Tracy, 2002, p. 199). Through the focus groups and interviews, the participants in this study clearly indicated that they were knowledgeable about the fundamental aspects of their SNU education. Without even knowing the particulars of the theological background of SNU, basic participant assumptions included that SNU exists to provide adult education in a Christian atmosphere. This articulation was to the point when this Tulsa participant said, "I think they provide higher education in the spirit, in the mind, and mission of Christ." Two other participants said it this way:

The university exists to shape the mind, character, and values of its students in a Christian manner, to educate its students, to serve as leaders in the community as role models, and as competent professionals in their fields.  
(OKC Campus Participant)

First of all, you have already limited it by saying, Christian. That word should be set apart from any other university mission statement, other than just furthering your education and promoting the individual self, but also promoting the growth of the person in the life of Christ. To become more than a babe in Christ, actually grow and give that opportunity to others because that's what you will be able to lend to the outer world, and produce a harvest yourself, with the

attributes that knowing Christ led you. (Tulsa Campus Participant)

Initially, upon purposeful exposure during the focus group sessions to the printed SNU mission, participants described their perceptions of specific ways that the university incorporated the mission into the Adult Studies programs. Participants attempted to connect their program experiences to the SNU mission statement. This is a means to understand the university mission in the context of the adult educational experience and perhaps gain "a larger picture and a far more objective view" (Covey, 1990, p. 29). At the outset of the focus groups, comments were surface in nature. However, as the focus groups progressed, participants became more comfortable and at ease with each other and shared more in depth their perceptions. "As human beings we have the amazing capability of becoming part of other people's experiences, and through watching and reflecting we can come to understand something about those experiences" (Patton, 1990, p. 261). In the focus group an open accepting environment is created, when adult learners begin to self-disclose and the "communication process is improved" (Hanna, 1995, p. 225). The candidness of one participant can act as a catalyst to an open focus group environment

(pp. 225-226). Initially, participants stated the obvious in response to questions. As one Tulsa participant stated, "The first line is actually the mission of Southern Nazarene University which is to educate." Another OKC participant stated strongly about SNU, "You are developing Christians while they go to school." Several offered agreement with this OKC participant who commented on the fact that, "Southern Nazarene University educates students for responsible Christian living within the contexts of the liberal arts, selected professional and graduate studies according to the variety of programs offered." As focus group discussions continue, the participants began to take definite positions on what they thought about the mission. An example came from one female participant when she stated:

The mission statement should state who you are, what you do, and what you stand for. There are so many different organizations that call themselves Christian. A mission statement should state what brand of Christianity to which you prescribe, what you are teaching, because it makes a difference. There is a lot of different places that call themselves Christian that I'm not certain about myself. I would expect to see that in the mission statement. (Tulsa Campus Participant).

Another female study participant actually wrote this response down and submitted it. This indicated an intentional act by the participant to communicate her



explicit position as it relates to mission. This study participant wrote:

I believe the goal of SNU was to educate diverse individuals by providing classes that bolster not only professional or business acumen and skills, but provide a chance for personal, moral, and spiritual growth, in line with the prevailing Wesleyan doctrine of the associated church, while doing so. (OKC Campus Participant)

The primary theme of mission encounter and integration included five secondary themes. These secondary themes were instructors, Biblical Perspectives, classroom environment, cohort group, and voice.

#### Mission Encounter and Integration: A Mixed Perspective

The Southern Nazarene University adult student ideally should encounter the university mission through the educational experience. The educational experience in itself can be transformative for the adult student (Mezirow, 1991). It is the educational experience fused with the university mission, which can make it a distinctive educational experience within the context of the unique culture of SNU. In order for an organization to become distinctive, requires a mission that meets the needs for people in a fresh and powerful way (Tracy, 2002, p. 31). This becomes evident through the comments of the focus group participants when they discussed instructors,

educational process when they specifically encounter the mission within the educational experience.

Mission integration is an intentional act by Adult Studies program leaders. Entrusted to the leadership is the responsibility "to engage the hearts and minds of the people who are charged with executing it" (Tracy, 2002, p. 31). It is the leadership's responsibility to bring mission to life (p. 31). A glimpse of mission integration effectiveness captured through the perceptions of focus group participants suggests program inconsistencies. It is evident that "good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (Palmer, 1998, p. 10). The instructor in the classroom holds a crucial element in the integration of university mission with educational experience.

### Instructors

Program leadership has the opportunity to give prominence to the university mission from initial adult learner contact through degree completion because of the role served and decision-making responsibilities attached. Program leadership has the responsibility to identify, train, and mentor all instructors in the adult degree-completion programs. Instructors are at the very heart of

the mission integrated educational experience for the adult learner. It is the good instructors that "possess a capacity for connectedness" (Palmer, 1998, p. 11). These instructors, "are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves" (p. 11). These connections are not held "in their methods but in their hearts—meaning heart in the ancient sense, as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self" (p. 11).

While voiced differently, the participants' perceptions in this study clearly identified instructors as vital to the integration of the university mission with the educational experience. What instructors teach will never have an effect "unless it connects with the inward, living core of our students' lives" (Palmer, 1998, p. 31). Participants described perceptions of how program leadership and instructors alike were open with their Christian belief system without being forceful. One participant recalled the very first night of the SNU experience with emphasis given to the fact that the university is Christian and continued to provide insight into perception of mission integration through instructors in the program with this account:

Well, I'll go back to our orientation, the very first night I came to orientation for the FSG program or the OL program. The Program Director stood up and said we are a Christian University and we will not apologize for that. We won't push it on you, and we will be respectful of you, in essence, but we won't apologize for who we are. That spoke volumes to me having gone to, as most of you as adults have gone to secular university. I never heard that; in fact, I heard quite the opposite. That's your opinion, and you need to keep it to yourself type thing. That's one of the instances. Some professors would open up with prayer and with a scripture or devotion, and some would not. However, in their dialogue with us and in discussion, it became clear very early that Christ was alive and well in their lives, in their decision-making processes, and in their course itself. (OKC Campus Participant)

Participants perceived that the instructors exemplified the university mission. The instructors gave life to the mission. They lived out their Christian beliefs before the eyes of learners. This participant articulated this perception:

I know that the instructors care. I'm trying to think of how to say this, the first line in the mission statement "Southern Nazarene University educates students." The professors, teachers, here are the part that educate. You can't educate me just out of that book there. Through their lives they have educated me. There have been times through these 13 months that I've wanted to quit and a couple of doctors, who will remain nameless, wouldn't let me. They wouldn't let me because of the way they live their lives and they cared about me. The last school I attended you wanted to quit, it was go ahead, we got your money. The folks here aren't that way; they educate me with their lives. (Tulsa Campus Participant)

Instructors must remember that each adult student is a "complex personality" engaged in the educational process (Kidd, 1973, p. 293). When an adult student walks into the classroom, life enters into the educational process and influences instructor and student relationships. This idea is important because the "whole person is involved in the learning transaction" (p. 293). Two participants put this pointedly in this context:

This is education in the context of relationship. This is relationship with each other and with instructors, administrators, and staff. This is so positive, and this word should be added to the mission statement. In a world that is relationship starved, this was a nice surprise for me. (OKC Campus Participant)

References to SNU as family, by the adult learners, were frequent in perceptions made by the participants. The term family can be defined "as a group of intimates, who generate a sense of home and group identity, complete with strong ties of loyalty and emotion, and an experience of a history and a future" (Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1993, p. 6). Intimacy is one of the highest values in human relationships (Palmer, 1998, p. 90). "An intimate relationship goes beyond an implicit capacity for connectedness: in intimacy we explicitly share our deeper natures with each other, in the belief that we can be fully known and the trust that we will be fully accepted" (p.

90). This participant illustrates her view of the outcome of the educational experience, within the context of a family experience:

I want to say thank you for inspiring me to be more. You not only support what we are doing currently but encourage for the future. I'm here now working hard attempting to reach the bar you have established. As a group, we all work for education. That is made easier by the support we received by the SNU family in this education program. The other thing is, you have a vested interested in us, how well we learn, and how well we will represent you in the world, so there is a Catch 22 situation. You work hard for us, we appreciate you, and we will continue to work hard for you and represent you well in the world.  
(OKC Campus Participant)

It is evident that participants perceive that instructors genuinely are concerned about their well-being. Compassionate instructors "create an atmosphere in which students are not afraid to talk about their concerns, problems, and deficiencies" (Conti & Fellenz, 1988, p. 96). Learners through their educational experience come to "know that good teachers care about them" (p. 97). In the educational experience, this perceived "caring is related to both the subject material and to them as individuals" (p. 97). Comments from these focus group participants captures the unique integration of the SNU mission with faith, learning, and life as it relates to relationship with instructors:

Another experience that has greatly affected me is with one of my instructors in particular. I asked him to pray for me about a particular situation and he agreed to pray for me and then asked if he could have a university chaplain to call me. This overwhelmed me because nowhere else in my previous college experience had this kind of experience ever occurred. (OKC Campus Participant)

Because of their integrity as instructors and the way they dealt with us. The compassion, the understanding, and the love that they have for what they do and the love they have for each of us. That is just communicated in the way they express the love in what they are doing, the way that they bring the material forth, and the way they relate with us. (Tulsa Campus Participant)

A study undertaken "without seeing it in its wider setting or without any principles for wider application" is less rewarding to the adult student (Kidd, 1973, p. 274). Recognition that learning occurs with maximum effectiveness "where there is similarity between the learning situation and the life situation" is widely accepted in adult education (p. 274). Examples of how learners perceived purposeful university mission integration through curriculum by instructors in the educational experience varied. Most participant perceptions of mission integration with curriculum by instructors were viewed as being consistent with instructors' personal beliefs. It was evident that learners perceived that "good teachers do a variety of things that are congruent with their personal

characteristics" (Conti & Fellenz, 1988, p. 98). These participants' noted mission integration with curriculum, handled expertly by instructors, in these comments:

One thing that an instructor said in one of our classes showed real integration in her teaching was the use of a Christian book, Jesus CEO. She brought that out and used excerpts during class time. That really showed that she was not only teaching the course principles through text but that she was finding Christian sources to bring into the classroom to illustrate the Christian perspective. That was nice to see, that integration into the classroom between the regular text and the Christian perspective. (OKC Campus Participant)

Two additional participants provided these examples of purposeful university mission integration with instructor use of the curriculum:

Specifically where it states "context of the liberal arts" in our previous mod, I found it strikingly refreshing that the instructor presented psychology from the textbook, but then he specifically went into Christian psychology and stated what these beliefs and values and theories are as well. Which would not be presented at a secular school, so I saw it directly answering that. Teaching the liberal arts, but with the Christian perspective. (Tulsa Campus Participant)

I think in some of the course work, the curriculum, just the questions that it asked and from the readings that we've been assigned. I think lots and lots and lots of the materials that we have read, really provokes soul searching in, you know, why are we here and asks those questions, what is our obligation to ourselves, to our fellow man and to God? What is our purpose for being here? I think that probably those questions, and maybe I'm just speaking for



myself, I guess that's what I should do instead of assuming it's that way for everybody else too. But for me during the course of the program, I've had to examine myself and sometimes ask myself questions, some of the same questions over and over again to see if I'm in the same place and thought about why am I doing this. (Tulsa Campus Participant)

### Biblical Perspectives

The participants identified the required program Biblical Perspective module, as a program cornerstone module, as the most significant aspect of integration of curriculum with university mission. The Biblical Perspectives module came to the forefront through participants' examples of mission integration with educational experience. There were numerous references to this module in the participant comments with note to instructors, content, classroom process, and personal response.

The Biblical Perspectives module is a required module, for all adult students across all undergraduate degree-completion programs. Biblical Perspectives "provides a study of the Bible as a foundation to an understanding of Western culture and history" and "explores the relevance of the Bible to modern day life" (SNU Catalog, 2003-2005, p. 235). This module is Module 7 in the Organizational Leadership program, Network Management program, and Nursing

program and in Module 9 in the Family Studies and Gerontology program. Instructors approved by SNU Religion Department teach the Biblical Perspectives module. Participants in this study noticed the direct relationship between the Biblical Perspectives module and mission integration. One participant summed up the general position that the Biblical Perspectives module is essential to link university mission with Adult Studies educational experience when stating:

I don't know if all the programs have the Biblical Perspectives, but I think that's a really important course. After the intensity of the program, it's a really good course to let you get into religious and spiritual thought. I think that is really important in helping meet the university mission of integration of faith, learning, and life. (OKC Campus Participant)

Learners appreciate instructors that are personable and caring. Adult learners also appreciate instructors with "high academic expectations of them" (Conti & Fellenz, 1988, p. 98). Adult learners value a facilitative learning environment and "come to class to learn" (p. 98). They also note instructors who "explore ideas and stimulate" the learner to think (p. 99). This participant articulated well thoughts on the importance of the Biblical Perspectives module with good instructors from the university mission viewpoint:

As an Adult Studies participant, I felt the satisfaction of balancing my home life, work, and academics. SNU made it very easy to participate at my own pace. The religious education classes were above par, and I know that I learned a great deal of information, as well as how to look at the Bible with a new awareness, both historical and spiritual. It is a testament to the staff, especially the religious studies professors that the Bible was presented in an engaging, thought-provoking manner. I felt encouraged to look at it critically, historically, and yet -- still with the eyes of faith. (OKC Campus Participant).

Adult learners appreciate instructors that encourage their questions. This is especially critical to a positive learning experience in the Biblical Perspectives module. The way that the instructor "handles questions in the formal classroom is central to the students view of the class and the teacher" (Conti & Fellenz, 1988, p. 99). Other participants brought out their perspectives of the importance of a positive educational experience within the Biblical Perspectives module for successful program mission integration by stating:

I'm in Biblical Perspectives class now and it's my favorite class. I don't see why this class isn't voted as a program favorite. It's a wonderful class to bring out questions and answers. They are not stating that it's 100% true they are wanting perspectives from other members of the class. I think it opens your mind. If there is anything I like to see more of is encouragement of me, as an adult, to not be afraid of spiritual things. I should study more of this myself as life enrichment. I would like to encourage every future SNU student to not be

afraid of this class and to see it as a valuable learning opportunity. I've learned a lot about history, not just the Lord but about Biblical history. It has been so interesting to me. (OKC Campus Participant)

The one thing that I absolutely agree with is the statement "responsible Christian living within the context of the liberal arts in selected and professional and graduate studies." I was an OL [Organizational Leadership] student. If there had been more than one Biblical class, I would have been turned off by that. It was not a part, I didn't feel, that it was a necessary part of my degree program. However, I took the class and got a whole lot out of it, and I actually wished it was one more week. Don't quote me on that. But I think that the point is, that they delivered the Christian aspect of living in the context of the degree I was seeking. I thought that it was good. (OKC Campus Participant)

Many elements contribute to a successful educational experience from the perspective of the participants. The classroom environment is vital to that success.

#### Classroom Environment

The importance of positive class experiences is critical for adult students to perceive the incorporation of the university mission with their education. The provision of an "emotional environment for older students that at least is welcoming and supportive" with the welfare of the learner at the forefront is essential (Kidd, 1973, p. 235). Emotional climate of the educational experience must be regarded (p. 234). The goal to create a learning "space in which the community of truth can be practiced" is

essential to an open classroom environment (Palmer, 1998, p. 132). There are six principles of effective practice suggested by Stephen Brookfield to enable instructors to enhance adult learner's opportunities to learn (Brookfield, 1986, pp. 9-20). The first principle is that participation is voluntary (p. 9). The second principle is mutual respect (pp. 12-13). The third principle is collaboration (p. 14-15). The fourth principle of effective practice is praxis, enabling action and reflection (pp. 15-16). Critical reflection is the fifth principle suggested by Brookfield (pp. 16-18). Finally, self-direction is a matter of "learning how to change our perspectives, shift our paradigms, and replace one way of interpreting the world by another" (p. 19). Participant perceptions indicated the importance of these practices to the open and invitational nature of the open classroom environment. One student from the OKC campus stated, "Mission impacts the tone and content of the classroom experience. The mission should define the classroom experience." Several participants voiced notation to the importance of this fact. These participants articulated the general concerns and surprises attached to the Biblical Perspectives module:

There were many reservations about our Biblical Perspectives class. This was the class that could have been absolutely horrible since the

group consisted of not only Nazarenes but most of the class was highly varied in their religious background and denominations. We have a very devote Catholic, a guy with an Islamic background, and some people that have never been involved in a church at all. I will have to say that in that class everybody was permitted to bring out their own views and ideas, and the professor was most understanding. As professor, he would state that this is what the Christians believe, and he never stated others were wrong but that this is just what he was here to teach, what the Christians believe, and what the Bible says. Every student was encouraged to make up his or her own mind. I think that is part of what the mission statement is saying, is that it is a ministry in education. You are ministering through education in a very non-judgmental approach. It's been wonderful, and I've heard a lot of good feedback. Everyone in the classroom has been okay to voice their own understanding, opinion, and their own concerns, and the professor is so mature about it and non-judgment while never criticizing anyone's religion. It's an education in a Christian environment. Many in class were afraid of what might be experienced in the Biblical Perspective module. It was taught in such a way that the instructor knew that if you expressed such bias and said that this is the only way to believe, that the students would shut him off and not receive the information. This instructor would say, "I know that's what you believe and what this religion believes, but I'm here to teach you what the Christians believe and if you have any more questions that I do not know, I will research that for you." That method of instruction and attitude has been really great for the class. We have not only learned about Christian religion but about world religions.

(OKC Campus Participant)

If the mission statement was done correctly, it inspires and challenges and then it serves as a major motivational tool for learning. In the various courses, in Biblical Perspectives is one of them, in FSG we also had one that was Family Dynamics and there was some very controversial

issues and I know in our particular class that we had some very lively discussions about certain opinions, certain lifestyles, certain choices those types of things. On many occasions, I felt that the mission fulfilled what it intended. And that the overall mission intention was, for me and the students, to think about those things that happened in class and the things that I have read and the life experience that I was gleaning from others, and between class to ruminate over that, and to think about what do I really believe. On many occasions especially in Biblical Perspectives' class, my own belief system was challenged, not in an adversarial type way, but he helped me to really solidify what I believe and what my intentions were as a believer. In addition, from that perspective I think that it fulfilled the broad picture of what it was trying to do. As a result, I feel like that, although I've been in church all my life, raised in a very Godly home, and I feel very fortunate in that respect. When I got to this place as an adult, I realized that I wasn't quite as solid on some of things that I thought I knew until I went through this program. I think it helped me stand more firmly on my feet and with greater determination to reach out to the community with my sense of foundation that I now have. (OKC Campus Participant)

The validation of how and what an adult learner comprehends is embedded in communication and critical discourse "when learners are encouraged to challenge, defend, and explain their beliefs; to assess evidence and reasons for these beliefs; and to judge arguments" (Cranton, 1997, p. 91). When done well it provides an opportunity for students to "learn to negotiate their own values, meanings, and purposes" (p. 91). Some topics by their very nature in the classroom are considered

difficult. If learners are to engage with a difficult topic, in order to learn at the deepest levels, they must find the classroom environment, "hospitable—inviting as well as open, safe and trustworthy as well as free" (Palmer, 1998, p. 75). "Learning does not happen when students are unable to express their ideas, emotions, confusions, ignorance, and prejudices" (p. 75). Learners in an open classroom are permitted to explore the "many paths down which discovery may take us, to the surprises that come with real learning" (p. 75). In this open classroom environment, learners are encouraged to appreciate the "need to feel the risks inherent in pursuing the deep things of the world or of the soul" (p. 75). Learners "recognize that they can learn much from others in the class" (Conti & Fellenz, 1988, p. 99). Good instructors encourage "discussions in which students can express their opinions and receive feedback" (p. 99). In the open classroom environment, the adult learner should find it safe to be overexposed in order to learn. This opens up the opportunity for adult learners willingly to tackle the sometimes-difficult module of Biblical Perspectives. An open classroom environment provides a further opportunity for mission integration as part of the educational experience within the classroom for the adult



learner to develop. One participant emphasized the importance of how the discussion in an open classroom environment validates the adult learner:

SNU believes in the intrinsic worth of all persons -- integrating of life, in their life. Example -- when differences on faith based issues came about in classroom discussion -- the instructor let the student voice his opinion then voiced hers -- without requiring agreement just acceptance of each position. Each person perceives himself or herself as being respected and accepted as is. This validates people on a very personal level as human beings of worth. (OKC Campus Participant)

I agree with the statement faith integration with learning and life. SNU is committed to provide adult access to educational opportunities in order that they may be empowered to develop intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. (OKC Campus Participant)

Fear impedes an adult learner's ability to participate in the "critical self-reflection central to transformative learning" (Cranton, 1997, p. 64; Cranton 1994). The transcendence of fear is essential to learning. In the context of an open classroom environment, between the instruction-learning transaction awareness of learner feelings are paramount. In the instruction-learning transaction, "good teachers are conscious of students' feelings" (Conti & Fellenz, 1988, p. 97). In an open classroom environment, an instructor will respectfully deal with the learners' "feelings and values" (p. 97). "Helping

individuals acknowledge and work with their fears is also a part of an adult educator's task" (Taylor, Marienau, & Fiddler, 2000, p. 6). To dispel the feeling of fear sometimes associated with a course of study, an open classroom environment, created in the context of instructor-learner relationship, enables an adult learner to engage more positively with the learning experience, which is important for positive mission integration in the educational experience. In a positive classroom climate, "positive learning experiences can help adults' desire and capacities for deeper learning" (p. 6). These participants pointed out that the diffusion of fear associated with learning is an outcome within an open positive classroom climate:

In this positive spiritual atmosphere, I'm seeing myself more as a spiritual person. I'm not as afraid of religion. I see it as an area I can explore. Spirituality is a natural part of this educational experience and because of that SNU has managed to created a unique learning atmosphere that I attribute partially to spirituality. I find that my learning is better. I find myself more motivated and positive about my future. I think of my life as more than just about me right now, but there is something more, a spiritual world, at work. I think it has enhanced my learning. (OKC Campus Participant)

This school is a perfect vehicle to bridge ecumenical thought through the auspices of education. We can all come here with our different views of how we perceive our Creator, and the common denominator is education, valuing each one here, yet having a framework of a belief system that has been successful throughout the ages. It's comforting that it's established -- everyone is valued here. (Tulsa Campus Participant)

It is the only reason that I am in graduate school at SNU. I could have saved a lot of money at OU, but I wanted the SNU experience. The SNU experience includes mission integration, facilitative learning environment with my professional student colleagues, relational learning with administration, instructors, and peers, student respect from administration, and an open honest positive learning environment. (OKC Campus Participant)

The standard provision of opportunity to voice oneself in the classroom has powerful implications for the adult learner. The participants were plain in the perceptions of the prevalent positive result of the didactic educational experience associated with voice.

### Voice

The concept of voice is important to understand in relation to the integration of the mission with the educational experience for the adult learner. The meaning of the term voice encompasses "voice as talk, voice as identity, and voice as power" (Hayes & Flannery, 2000, p. 108). Voice as identity is a "key dimension of learning" (p. 108). Voice as power is acquired "through the

expression and validation of" adults experiences, needs, and interests in the context of learning (p. 108). A strong voice is important in many cultures, especially to the Native American cultures. Voice comes to life through language for "language is the key" (Kipp, 2000, p. 1). Language is a guide that will illuminate the way (p. 12). Proper respect for the adult learner is mandatory in the educational experience when knowledge is shared and transferred in order for it to be fully developed and appreciated (Still Smoking, 1996, p. 157). Learners must be invited "to find their authentic voices, whether or note they speak in ways approved by others" (Palmer, 1998, p. 75). It is only when learners "can speak their minds does education have a chance to happen" (p. 75).

Voice is encouraged in a positive learning environment with acceptance of discourse in the context of relationship between learner, peers, and instructor. This is imperative for effective mission integration. Participants in the study identified the benefits of finding their voice on a highly personal level. Participants indicated the positive outcome of voice attributed to the SNU educational experience.

Along the way in this educational experience, I am finding my own voice and my own thoughts. In my particular culture, it is generally accepted

that your husband has a strong say on what you believe. Here at SNU it is encouraged that you express yourself, and I am finding who I am and what I think. (OKC Campus Participant)  
I came out of SNU undergraduate with more than just a B.S. but a different way of life. (OKC Campus Participant)

I think that [voice] comes from people being valued, and here that does mean something, even if it's a different perspective, and each one of us will connect in some way through the next few months. (Tulsa Campus Participant)

Adult students are in tune to not only what is happening personally to them, but also keenly aware of the dynamics that are playing out in the lives of others. An open learning environment is a "place in which the group's voice is gathered and amplified, so that the group can affirm, question, challenge, and correct the voice of the individual" (Palmer, 1998, p. 75). The importance of cultivating voice growth opportunities for the adult learner in the adult learning experience is crucial. Transformative learning is a social process and the "educator has a key role to play" in the learning process (Cranton, 1997, p. 91; Mezirow 1991). Such a process serves to transform adult learners not only individually but also corporately. During this process, "the people begin to get their history into their hands, and then the role of education changes" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 215). A primary objective of the open classroom is to provide

educational experiences that encompass social processes in the context of "islands of decency, places for people to be human" (p. 9). This enables the adult learner to "learn in such a way that they continue to grow" (Horton, Kohl & Kohl, 1990a, p. 133). These participants illustrate the social process of learning in an open classroom climate and the positive outcomes:

I believe also in where they say the integrating faith, learning, and life with our beliefs. That's a very true statement because they do take our life, our job, and our family into consideration and our faith. An example of that would be that someone in our classroom voiced an opinion of a different faith than our instructor, and she allowed him to voice that opinion and she voiced hers, and there wasn't an argument that there wasn't any discord between them it was just on an adult level of acceptance. (OKC Campus Participant)

Other participants immediately followed this comment with a personal acknowledgement,

I like that, being able to express individual convictions in a group discussion. It's a different kind of experience for me. (OKC Campus Participant)

It gave you something to think about. We can't just all be one thing all the time. That's not what the university by definition is. I mean if you are going to get an education you have to hear other viewpoints, challenge them, discuss them. That is what the mission statement says to me. I felt Christ in every single interaction I have at this school. (OKC Campus Participant)

Education within the context of relationship is not new to adult education. It is also a value added element identified by participants as a compliment in the educational process. The cohort group provides the opportunity for education within the context of relationship.

### Cohort Group

The use of groups as an "instrument for growth and development of their members" is a widely held conviction in adult education (Knowles, 1988, p. 137). A cohort group is foundational to the SNU learning community. It is within the learning community that the "integrity of the student's inner self must be respected, not violated, if we expect the student to learn" (Palmer, 1998, p. 76). It is also within the learning community that exists "a dialogical exchange in which our ignorance can be aired, our ideas tested, our biases challenged, and our knowledge expanded, an exchange in which we are not simply left alone to think our own thoughts" (p. 76). In a learning community "that respects the mystery of the soul, we help each other remove impediments to discernment" (p. 77). It is within the learning community, that all who participate "can help us see both barriers and openings to the truth that lives within us" (p. 77). The university, "while it

is not the institution of the church, has its own life, and its own way of being—it is part of the church” (Hestenes, 1991, p. 2). The Christian university is inclusive of the work of the soul and “is called to a life of prayer, a life of worship, and life of nurturing the knowledge and love of God” (p. 2). Study participants perceived the life of the cohort group, as a community of learners and as an extension of the church. An SNU cohort group is a group of 12 to 22 adult learners that remain constant throughout the duration of their educational degree-completion program. The employment of the cohort group is a standard practice in the SNU adult degree-completion programs. The cohort group setting has brought another dimension to university mission integration as participants explain links with their perception of mission and the cohort group experience. The participants of this study revealed the importance of the cohort group as a learning community and as an extension of the church. Participants compared educational experience within the cohort group, to the church at work in higher education. These participants gave meaning to their perception of the church at work in higher education:

I felt like the church was at work in my education. Perhaps it was simply our particular group that came together, but someone had



mentioned earlier that when they gathered every night they didn't pray, but our group would pray. We did pray most every class. I know there were a few professors that seemed to shy away from that, but we did pray anyway. We also had prayer request. (OKC Campus Participant)

The other thing I wanted to say about the church is that the church is not a building. It's the Body of Christ, and so having the school that's an extension as a finger, hand, or arm the Body of Christ, whether that be a hospital or something else. It is amazing to me to have the opportunity to experience a part of that Body as education. All I can say to that is Hurrah to you. (Tulsa Campus Participant)

I like the part here about the university is the church at work in higher education, faith, learning, because that I think summarizes what happens here. It's faith, it's learning, it's all these things are because of our faith, because of our prayer and what we share what we have in common. That's faith. Learning, what we're doing here -- we're learning. And then life, we're getting to use our life experiences to apply to learning, and we're examining our lives. It's a real strong sentence. It makes you wonder why it's at the end and not at the first. Here I am, this is what you're looking for, and then start going into the basics. Because when you read that, wow, that's powerful. It is working all together. (Tulsa Campus Participant)

### Cultural Diversity

Within the context of the cohort group educational experience, participants perceived that cultural diversity is embraced and encouraged. There is a perception by participants that cultural diversity is a valued part of the SNU educational experience. In addition to a

discussion of the church at work, the participants also emphasized the importance of cultural diversity. Cultural diversity in the educational environment enriches the life of the adult learner in the learning experience and provides for the university's cross-cultural community mission emphasis. It is unmistakable that the world is "turning into a global village" (Klopf, 2001, p. 14). The acknowledgement is imperative, that intercultural consciousness "within the educational environment enhances the quality of learning for all students" (p. 13). The concept of culture includes "physical and the intangible contents of the human habitat" (Yankelovich, 1981, p. 13). Culture encompasses the values, customs, rituals, ways of perceiving the world, life styles, and ideologies of the adult learners who participate in the educational experience (p. 13). Participants in this study felt that cultural diversity is important as it relates to mission integration. Participants brought prominence to the importance of the mission emphasis of cross-cultural community life of the cohort group:

Right off the bat, I'd have to say that cross cultural stands out to me. I see a lot of people here at SNU from other cultures. What comes to mind are not just the different ethnic cultures represented, but there are different religious cultures and socio-economic cultures represented as well. (OKC Campus Participant)

Yes, I'm always willing to learn. That's what we're here for, to learn about different people, different cultures and everything. So, I'm open to it. (Tulsa Campus Participant)

I think you do have to include culture giving insight into the university's unique culture and appreciating the diversity of all cultures. In the classroom, you have many different cultures that are coming together intensely for a period of time, and we must accept and even appreciate the differences for the sake of learning. (OKC Campus Participant)

The positive effect of community in the context of learning in the educational experiences of the cohort group is unmistakable (Maehl, 2000, p. 177). Adult learners "learn about unity by acting in unison" (Adams, 1975, p. 207). There is a powerful perceived outcome of support in the process of education by the adult learner when this unity moves beyond the classroom. This participant's perceptive comment captures the emphasis to the integrative aspects mission with learning and life in the cohort group beyond the classroom:

The integration of faith, life, and learning part of the mission has become really important to me. I remember being told in the first class that when the class is over we will be like brothers and sisters. This is really true; one person got married in our class and the entire class attended her wedding. It is really important to me too because we really do help each other. In my case, I have been accepted, and I have also learned to accept others for who they are in spite of our differences. I've learned a lot of patience. (OKC Campus Participant)

An integrated university mission with educational process results is the perception that the adult learner has a positive learning experience with SNU, and there sometimes appears to be a "spiritual force working behind the scenes to bring the right people together under the right circumstances" (Tracy, 2002, pg. 11). The successful accomplishment of the educational process consists of a concert of participants, instructors, program leaders, and staff that results in a perceived positive learning experience for the student. This accomplishment results in the perception of university achievement of the "magical combination" of mission core preservation with adult education progress (Collins, 2001, p. 195). However, when done poorly the adult learner perception is one of dissatisfaction. Adult learner perception of educational dissatisfaction leaves the educational experience with the perception that the experience and its process are less than desirable. The third primary theme of mission consistency incorporated two secondary themes. Those themes were deficits and meaning perspectives.

#### Mission Consistency

A distinct contrast in perspectives emerged from the focus group participants. Not all participants perceived that the mission was being fulfilled through program

experiences with instructors and academics. These perceptions resounded as clearly, as those of the participants who perceived mission fulfillment positively, particularly in the areas of the Biblical Perspectives module, learners' sense of affiliation, and mission integration consistency. Mission consistency across all adult studies programs was inconsistent.

### Deficits

This is an information age when organizations with "more and better information supposedly have an advantage" (Collins, 2001, p. 78). In the analysis of the ascent and decline of organizations, rarely is it found that organizations stumble because they required information (p. 78). Organizations fall when they ignore the truth of its own shortcomings (pp. 78-80). Some of the study participants identified program deficits.

When participants responded to questions about perceived mission deficits within the Adult Studies programs, the answers communicated a stark perspective. Some saw a difference between the mission and action while others attributed knowledge of the mission to specific demands. Although their comments were diverse, the participants' answers became emphatic at this point. One OKC participant stated effectively, "The mission statement

as written; one, is that I didn't know there was one, and two, what we actually did and what the mission statement is actually, are two totally different things." Another Tulsa participant summed it up with, "During this whole course, I felt very little, I don't know if you call it pressure or what, to the responsible Christian living." Frequently, participant comments suggested that the university mission and program experience did not always coincide and that the result was program disappointment. The illustration of program disappointment was repeated especially in terms of the Biblical Perspective module and dissatisfaction with module instructors:

The Bible class was a disappointment for our group. The instructor spent more time describing inaccuracies of the Bible than using it as a tool of hope for the students. I'm envious of the experiences that some of you have had. It sounds like it could have been something more than what we received. (OKC Campus Participant)

In my Biblical Perspectives class, issues that could have been very divisive, my instructor was very masterful in handling those. But, I have heard other students say their Biblical Perspectives teacher was not effective in that way at all. (OKC Campus Participant)

The Highlander approach to educating adults is aligned with the SNU educational approach to creating an open classroom environment. "The Highlander approach to educating adults to make change in their lives connects the

curriculum with students' experiences, gives participants an opportunity to share their views with others and solve problems together in a safe and supportive environment, and facilitates critical reflection and discourse" (Ebert, Burford, & Brian, 2003, pg. 326). Optimal conditions in the classroom are essential to generate opportunities for transformative adult learning. One key principle to an open educational climate in the classroom is "being open to alternative perspectives" and "having equal opportunity to participate" (Mezirow, 1996, p. 170). Without these educational elements, the creation of a closed educational climate exists within the classroom experience for the adult learner and the learning opportunity is stifled. In a closed educational climate, the adult learners' self-esteems are "often wounded and their views of mankind somewhat dampened" (Conti & Fellenz, 1988, p. 100). Instructors create a closed educational climate when they appear to "enjoy the power inherent in being in charge of the class" (p. 100). The position of the instructor indicates to the learners "something needs to be taught" which outweighs the learners' view that "they have something to learn" (p. 100). Participants emphasized their disappointment with the Biblical Perspectives module

and the closed educational climate and the resultant negative perception.

I am very sad that others in different groups have appeared to have had a real positive Biblical Perspectives module experience, and maybe everyone in my group did, but I didn't. It sounds like it has the potential to be a really really good course. It's not that I wanted the instructor, like she said, they sounded wonderful, to accept all that I had to say or what my classmates had to say, but I feel like I tried so hard to not to be judgmental and ended up being almost run down with a judgmental instructor. It wasn't the work load or having to read the Bible that was the problem. That one class to me was one I was really looking forward to. In the classroom experience, I felt like I was trying to defend God through the whole thing. (OKC Campus Participant)

Cross-cultural community life is a mission deficit when different views of Biblical Perspectives were not well received by the staff member during that module. It was disappointing that only one view was correct. (OKC Campus Participant)

If it was called Dr. XYZ's Biblical Perspective class maybe I would have expected as much as I sat in class. But the class is called Biblical Perspectives. I thought it was designed to expose us to various Biblical perspectives and provide opportunity for us to evaluate our views and to listen to other peoples' views. That's the way that I approached the class. The fact that it didn't accomplish what it was supposed to do left a negative impression. It wasn't any different from other negative or biased religious experiences. Who knows what the long-term negative spiritual consequences are attached to this lost learning opportunity? You know that most everybody has a Biblical perspective. Why did this module have to contribute to a negative perspective? (OKC Campus Participant)



Learners "vary widely in their comfort with and capacity for attending" (Taylor, Marienau, & Fiddler, 2000, p. 25). It is common for learners to "move swiftly to judgment based on unexamined criteria such as not wanting to dwell on what seems already familiar or, conversely, too foreign" (p. 25). This type of "premature judgment may also stem, from the desire to feel in control and knowledgeable" (p. 25). Some adult learners "would rather assume they know something than explore the possibility that they do not know" (p. 25). Instructors must be aware of this fact, and work exceedingly hard at attending to the needs of the adult learner and thoroughly covering module content. Perhaps in these situations the instructors could have approached the content differently, but these instructors came across as weak and inexperienced. This created a negative lasting impression for the learners. These participants reaffirmed this dissatisfaction position with these comments:

What really bothered me specifically about the class was how the Biblical Perspective was talked about. It was like the instructor wasn't telling the whole story. He wasn't giving even the Biblical history or the various ways of interpretation. It was one person's perspective trying to convince people it was this way. I sat there for two weeks and didn't say anything, and then finally I said that his instruction was really bothering me. I asked the class if I was right, if I was off center here, if everybody

else believed what he was saying, or do other people believe this way, or if it was just the instructor's belief. He said, "Well, it's not really my belief but I'm just giving you the Biblical perspective," but nobody else in the class could believe what he was presenting. I was disturbed. He was a weak instructor and did not represent the quality SNU instructor I was accustomed to in the program. I'm not even sure he was Nazarene. If that is the church at work in higher education, you may have a problem. (OKC Campus Participant)

I guess to clarify where I was coming from was the Nazarene. I don't want it shoved down our throat. I'm a pretty new Nazarene. I was not raised in the church, and I married into a very religious family about 10 years ago. I had a lot of trouble accepting the Nazarene faith because I had misconceptions, and I know a lot of people that do. I think the Nazarene church is perceived in a bad light by a lot of secular people. That's why I would like to see something about the Nazarenes, even in our Biblical Perspectives class. He did not explain that one religious denomination. He explained a lot of the other religions but not the Nazarene faith. He was not of the Nazarene faith. Why was a non-Nazarene teaching this module? That's one thing that I would at least like to see is a summary of what the Nazarenes' believe because I am still learning the Nazarene faith and what they believe. (OKC Campus Participant)

It just seems from what everybody is saying thus far, it's meant to challenge your thinking, I've learned a lot about religions. I just think you should call the class World Religions. It kind of gives you an idea that you are going to talk about something liberal. Qualifying the study with statements like, "This may not be something we expect of you and you are going to challenge this thought here." But, when you think of Biblical Interpretations or Perspectives, you think that the study, it's going to be about the Bible, it's going to be about Christ, it's going to be about God from the Judeo Christian thought.

If you want to talk about different religions and want to learn about different religions, that's great, but call it World Religions. don't focus on the Judeo Christian Bible. Give this, [held up book]; give something else that talks about World Religions. That way there are no misconceptions as to what you are expecting when you go into it. If you just change the title of the class, then they are getting what they expect, perhaps World Religions. (OKC Campus Participant)

An additional deficit that became apparent was in regard to the lack of explanation provided about SNU's theological heritage, which some participants felt, deprived them of knowing more clearly about their association with SNU. This participant chose SNU for a higher education degree, but she perceived information that would have enabled her to distinguish herself as a legitimate member of the SNU family deficient.

I have fallen in love with this place and its people, but in the end I feel more like a foster child, transient, instead of feeling like an adopted child, truly accepted, having access to a new found history and legacy. I like the idea of being adopted into your SNU family -- my SNU family. No, I don't want to sign a church membership card. (OKC Campus Participant)

For some participants interwoven into the perception of the educational experience within the context of relationship was the participants' meaning perspective. At some point in the educational process, there was a shift in meaning perspective for some participants.

## Meaning Perspective

The nature of the discussion content shifted as the focus group sessions progressed. Differing perspectives emerged. Participants that had remained relatively silent early in the session began to contribute program perceptions when they were apparently more comfortable in the focus group process. As the focus group participants became more at ease, stronger opinions surfaced in relation to the perceived deficits. These perceptions appeared to relate to the participants' meaning perspective. A meaning perspective is a consistent "set of expectations that constitutes an orienting frame of reference that we use in projecting our symbolic models and that serves as a (usually tacit) belief system for interpreting and evaluating the meaning of experience" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 42). Meaning perspectives comprise numerous meaning schemes to determine the virtue and appropriateness of every experience (p. 42). An adult learner's meaning perspective both determines the very essence of who the learner is and influences the manner in which learner acts, comprehends, experiences, judges, and perceives the world (p. 42). Frequently, emotion accompanies the articulation of a meaning perspective. This would also provide indication as to why one participant became emotional in

his comment about the lack of emphasis in the Adult Studies program on Christian living if actual experience did not measure up to perceived mission expectation beyond the Biblical Perspectives module:

I differ a little bit on that opinion about that [SNU mission integration]. I feel that the people here are great, and they do all they need to do to foster the teamwork aspect that goes into the course here as compared to the traditional classes. I don't think that SNU follows the mission statement as well as it could. I don't think it does its part in cultivating the Christ aspect of it. I found that in a lot of my classes that they, people, wouldn't come in and pray or anything like that. I am not saying that has to be done, but Christ had very little to do with my coursework here. When Biblical Perspectives came along, the materials that I got, and I brought this book here as an example, is "Adam to Armageddon." I felt that it more or less cultivates the questioning aspect and did not go to cultivate that relationship as far as Christ went. It went to kind of contradict the Bible. It implies that God makes mistakes and things like that, whereas where I came from, God is incapable of making mistakes. So I felt that was contradictory to the mission statement and really what I expected from SNU. Now the business wise, people here are great. People here know me by name and I really like that. It's not something I got at any other school, but I think, when I think of my perception of SNU it's just a very good business oriented school. Really knows how to market itself and do better at what it needs to do to get people to spread the word. "Hey at OU you are a lost person' and a number but at SNU they know you by your name" so I just think of it as a business organization. (OKC Campus Participant)

The perceptions of the adult learners included the position that they were acquiring a good education and receiving

quality customer service. It was the perception that a good education and quality customer service did not equal a distinctive educational experience within a Christian context implied the perceived educational deficit.

I certainly wasn't trying to imply that I might have been ostracized or that people should be or that, as being a Southern Nazarene school that everyone should be of the Southern Nazarene faith, but I certainly think that you have a certain responsibility when you belong to that, to at least ground your material to the Protestant value. Now I'm not saying that everyone should have to open up with prayer or anything, but I certainly didn't get that impression from my professors. I couldn't tell if they were Christian or not in the way they presented the material, the way they talked. I'm not saying that you have to, but, I mean, I didn't think that Christ was the pinnacle of anything throughout the material presented. I'm not saying I didn't get a good quality education because I think I did. I just think that the mission statement is a little skewed there. I don't think that Christ is in the center of much of any of the academics. (OKC Campus Participant)

I don't want to beat a dead horse but I also think that people should step outside the box here and think when we were talking about this a little while ago, as far I got Christ out of everything I did when this person remembered my name and stuff. We can't confuse good customer service with good Christian principles in someone's life. You can go out to Tinker Clinic where I work at and someone's got great customer service but I don't know what their religion is. I just don't want us to confuse that. You know what I mean. (OKC Campus Participant)

An additional component of the participants' meaning perspective included a desire for more SNU history. There

appeared to be a desire to understand what makes this organization "unique in the minds" of its adult learners (Tracy, 2002, p. 153). Increasingly, it became evident that Southern Nazarene University adult students desired information about the SNU heritage. The association with the university provides the adult learner with a sense of extended identity (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982, p. 30). Some of the participants have begun to think of SNU as part of their extended identity and felt that they had a right to know about it. These participants simply stated:

Who you are as Nazarenes should be reflected in conduct of faculty, staff, and administration. We like you as people, but we don't really know you. You have not done a good job of educating all of us about Nazarene Wesleyan-holiness. If it is part of your mission, I think we should know what it is. (OKC Campus Participant)

Please know that I wasn't saying that I wanted this information shoved down my throat. I just want to know what the Nazarenes' believe. I've gone to the First Christian Church, and they have a flyer that tells you their beliefs and what the church is about. I am currently attending a Baptist church. I didn't know what their beliefs were and I asked them again. They provided me with a flyer. (OKC Campus Participant)

Throughout the educational experience the adult learner is potentially in the "process of reflecting critically on experience," engaged in the process of making meaning of that experience (Taylor, Marienau, & Fiddler, 2000, p. 29). These learner interpretations are subject to "personal

beliefs and values as well as norms and expectations derived from the sociocultural context" (Cranton, 1996, p. 85). According to these participants and the personal meaning they have attached to the educational experience, they perceive that additional theological information is necessary. Participants emphasized the need to understand the SNU heritage because of the choices made for association:

I would like to hear more about the Nazarene perspective. I mean all these programs have the Biblical Perspective module, and I would like to think that if I or another student wanted to attend this university, we would like to know a little bit more about the Nazarene perspective just because we have chosen that association for our education. (OKC Campus Participant)

I think at least that if I saw someone with a degree from Brigham Young University, I may not think they were Mormon, but I would think they would understand the Mormon religion and could explain it a little. If we had Nazarene understanding, we could tell anybody what it meant. I am embarrassed that I cannot explain it. (OKC Campus Participant)

Yes, what is the church about, its beliefs? People sometimes say, "Oh you go to SNU where you have to take one of those Bible classes where you have to learn about religion stuff." My response is, "No, we have to take Biblical Perspectives." When they ask, "What was it about?" I can say, "Well it covers the Bible, and it was really interesting because there are a lot of different denominations and actually the way I was raised was Lutheran but we learned about the Catholic perspective, etc., the learning environment was real open, and our instructor was very knowledgeable. He was real vocal about the



general Christian perspective. It was a good learning experience." But when I am asked about the Nazarene perspective, I have nothing specific to say other than the fact that SNU has a Nazarene affiliation. (OKC Campus Participant)

It appears that in some ways that you have found some balance. There may be a need to provide more consistency in providing a good overview about the Nazarene Wesleyan perspective across the board with all instructors, in all groups, and in all programs. There may even be a need to screen your religion instructors better. (OKC Campus Participant)

This understanding will help the students to know who you are and why you are like the way you are. Your Nazarene background is nothing to be ashamed of, it really reflects on you and maybe even how you conduct business with us, and even perhaps why you have created this adult learning program. (OKC Campus Participant)

Adult learners throughout the educational experience are in the process of meaning making. For the adult learner "meaning currently being made is affected by all the meaning already made; meaning is never permanently fixed" (Taylor, Marienau, & Fiddler, 2000, p. 30). Perceived meaning deficits occur when consistently overtime, the adult learner perceives little or no integration of university mission within the educational experience. It appears that Adult Studies adapted to meet the changing educational needs of the adult learner but failed to preserve university mission in the educational experience consistently. One comment exemplified this fact

by stating that SNU education was not just about good customer service but living out the distinctive university mission:

But you know in the customer service setting you said that here at SNU that they haven't forgotten the people come first. That is great and I personally believe that here the people come first and that is fine but again that is customer service and business. When Christ is the center of an organization, Christ comes first. That's the difference that I hadn't noticed. Like I said, this is a great organization. I totally support us. I'm here for my master's degree. They're getting all my money. I totally think I'm getting a great education here. I wouldn't change that I've gone to SNU. I would rather an organization that is at least affiliated with some sort of church or God like structure in some sort of way if I'm going to get an education, that is going to cost me tons of money. I'd rather it be Southern Nazarene than OU. I'm just saying it is far from the mission statement.  
(OKC Campus Participant)

Other participants from this focus group followed this participant's comment with these statements:

And don't try to, well, water down the mission. Kind of like the gentleman here, who said that he didn't get what he thought he was going to get or learn what he wanted to learn through his educational experience in light of his perception of the university mission. He got a good education but not in light of the stated mission. You know people won't like being kind of blind-sided. Be honest. (OKC Campus Participant)

It is apparent that students seem to remember what was real and what was dishonest about their educational program. It was like he said, "I got this and didn't get this". His frustration is genuine with the apparent inconsistency with the stated mission and the reality of his experience.

Make sure you live up to your mission in all of the individual adult studies programs. Be consistent and live up to your mission. (OKC Campus Participant)

Some participants were less verbose in their comments and less descriptive, but the perception message was clear: mission integration within the Adult Studies programs was inconsistent. Participants perceived the lack of mission integration as being dishonest with the adult learner. Participants perceived the need for honesty and consistency with mission integration across all programs for the benefit of all learners. It was noticeable to the focus group participants, and they appeared to sum up the problem best with their own perceptive comments, such as these participants who stated:

Don't try to just cover yourself for other people. Just state what you want to do and go out there and do it. It's like what you said, it's like we want to appease these people we want to appease this and appease this. Just say this is what you are going to do. If people don't like it, well you know, they don't have to go to school here. They can go someplace else. There's tons of fine universities around the nation. This is what we do here, and this is why we do it. This is what we offer, and if you want to learn this in our culture, then this is why you are coming to us. Just state to them when they complain, that this is our mission, mission statement, and/or our philosophy. This is who we are. You can exist without appeasing everyone. (OKC Campus Participant)

Like I said, we all have different classes, programs, instructors, and everything. It looks

like we had different experiences and some were negative. (OKC Campus Participant)

The mission only impacts learning negatively when it is presented as the guiding principal and then is neither upheld nor supported by the institution. (OKC Campus Participant)

It was plain that study participants were seeing their educational experience in a larger context, beyond the fact of completing a bachelor's of science degree.

### Summary

The participants in the study have purposefully chosen SNU with the comprehension that SNU was a Christian university with an affiliation to a Christian church. Participants generally agreed that they perceived themselves receiving a good education from SNU in light of adult educational principles, customer service, and course of study. The participants clearly perceived the Biblical Perspectives module as foundational to the integration of university mission across all of the adult studies programs. The overall perceptions of participants were in relation to the primary themes of mission exposure, mission integration, and mission consistency. The secondary themes that emerged related to initial mission exposure, decision-making, basic assumptions, instructors, Biblical Perspectives, classroom environment, voice, cohort group, cultural diversity, deficits, and meaning perspectives.

The detection of the limited mission exposure with explanation prior to program enrollment indicated a potential weakness. Participants desired more exposure to the SNU mission with the perception that it was potentially important for educational decision-making. Participant perceptions also indicated the need for clarification as to the basic assumptions of the meaning of "Christian" in the SNU educational experience. The clarification of Christian as applied through the Nazarene Wesleyan-holiness theological tradition would provide a frame of reference for students to understand the meaning of Christian through this tradition in light of the educational experience. This would help alleviate misconceptions associated with the diverse assumptions associated with the meaning of Christian. When provided early in the educational experience it would then provide a consistent frame of reference for all adult learners throughout the program.

The initial perceptions of the participants as educational consumers shifted as they formed relationships within the cohort groups, with instructors, and with program leaders. Participants saw themselves in association with each other and with the university. This association resulted in a new desire for an extended identity. Some participants' perceptions revealed

dissatisfaction with a lack of information provided about SNU heritage, which now aligned with the participants' recent perception of newfound heritage by association.

The participants appreciated the quality of education, but there was tension between inconsistencies in relation to program participants' experiences with mission encounter and integration. The lack of consistent mission integration across all programs relative to curriculum, instructors, and over-all educational experience was problematic in all discussions. Participants with positive mission integration perceptions assumed that all program participants would have familiarity with the positive experiences. Participants with negative mission integration perceptions assumed that all program participants would have familiarity with a negative experience. As it became evident that this was not true, participants with positive perceptions were disappointed with SNU and sympathetic with participants with negative perceptions. Participants with negative program perceptions appeared to diffuse the negative emotions attached to the experience based on the realization that the weaknesses attached to the integration of mission with the SNU program experience was not across all programs. Participants with positive perceptions strongly supported

the mission integration strengths and offered consolation to participants with negative perceptions. The study participants suggested the need for program consistency in relation to mission integration with the Biblical Perspective module, instructors, and classroom environment.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary of the Study

Higher educational institutions have always held special prominence as places of learning in society. Relatively stable, higher educational institutions were viewed as constant and slow to change. In recent history demographic forces, societal demands, and government policy have made the market for higher education multifaceted. Presently, higher education is in the midst of change. The full extent of that change is yet to be determined. With a business model approach, private non-profit and for-profit higher educational institutions, influenced by these same market forces, have quickly responded to the new multifaceted educational demands. One specific market niche in higher education correlate to the demographic shift and unique needs of the adult learner. The evidence of this, which is seen by the rise of non-traditional educational options designed specifically for working adults, has met with success. The design of many of these non-traditional programs is around degree-completion programs and cohort systems.



Some private Christian colleges, threatened with traditional enrollment decline and cost increases, turned to the non-traditional adult learner market in order to steady the apparent downward traditional enrollment spiral. These responsive institutions of higher education quickly found reward for their initiative in adult education degree-completion programs. Many of these non-traditional adult-degree completion programs are coming of age, and for Christian higher education institutions, it is time to take a second look at these programs in terms of the how, what, and why behind them. One such Christian higher education institution is Southern Nazarene University (SNU) in Bethany, Oklahoma. SNU has been in the business of higher education on behalf of the adult learner since 1989. The SNU adult degree-completion programs have increased, and the adult learner enrollment has multiplied. SNU is perched on the edge for growth; however, the institutional question that remains unaddressed is whether the fulfillment of the university mission, through the adult degree-completion programs is accomplished.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions of adult learners who are participating in degree-completion programs at Southern Nazarene University of their educational experience as it relates to the

mission of the university. The focus was on describing the influences, factors, and qualities of the educational experience perceived by the student, and this was then related to the university mission. This study used the following research questions: (a) what do the adult learners consider the university mission in the educational experience, (b) how do adult learners encounter university mission through the educational experience, (c) what are perceptions of the adult learner regarding the importance of the university mission to the educational experience, and (d) how important is the university mission to learning?

This case study used a naturalistic design in order to collect and analyze qualitative data in order to describe the adult learner perceptions of university mission integration within the contexts of the SNU adult degree-completion programs. The data gathered was through the conduction of focus groups with the utilization of an interview guide with specific open-ended questions relating directly to the four research questions. Initial interview guide questions were developed and piloted to assure clarity of the questions. Based on the pilot test with other adult studies students, modification to the questions was completed. The data gathered was from focus groups

with 46 adult participants, follow-up member check interviews, and triangulated with document analysis with the review of reflections papers written by SNU adult degree-completion students at program completion. Two outside qualitative researchers participated in a peer debriefing relationship with the researcher and brought to the study expertise in qualitative research, adult education, Christian Higher Education, Southern Nazarene University, and SNU School of Adult Studies students, and programs. This team approach to research brought an ardent level of objectivity to the research process. A final stage of this study was the incorporation of a modified reflection-in-action step, which involved the presentation of study findings to the SNU School of Adult Studies leadership team for program consideration. This was a purposeful step to include the consumers of this research in this study and brought the opportunity for practical, consequential, and immediate implications for these findings. The population of the study was limited to SNU adult degree-completion program students. Participants represented all undergraduate degree-completion programs in various stages of program progress from relatively new students to those recently graduated and from all campus

locations. The identification of study participants was through a purposeful sample.

### Summary of Findings

The findings of this study were conceptualized around 3 primary themes and 11 secondary themes. The primary themes were mission exposure, mission encounter and integration, and mission consistency. The secondary themes were initial mission exposure, decision-making, basic assumptions, instructors, Biblical Perspectives, classroom environment, voice, cohort group, cultural diversity, deficits, and meaning perspectives. The primary theme of mission exposure included three secondary themes, which were initial mission experiences, educational decision-making, and student basic assumptions. The primary theme of mission encounter and integration included six secondary themes of program instructors, Biblical Perspectives, classroom environment, student voice, cohort group, and cultural diversity. The primary theme of mission consistency included two secondary themes of program deficits and student meaning perspectives.

For each focus group, the initial part of the focus group experience involved discussion related to the participants' perception of the purpose of the organizational mission in general and followed with

questions related to the participants' perceived understanding of the SNU mission. Generally, participants understood the purpose of an organizational mission, perceived that they understood the SNU mission, and perceived limited exposure to the mission in print, web format, or any other form of media.

There was participant agreement that early exposure to the university mission would be beneficial to some prospective students for educational decision-making purposes. However, participants did express the perception that the name of the university had already acted as a beacon to adult learners specifically looking for an educational encounter with a Christian university. It became increasingly apparent that basic assumptions aligned adult learners with the university based on the name of the university and its association with a religious affiliation.

Participants spoke to the importance of mission after enrollment as they became acquainted with the university and its culture. Some participant assumptions about the SNU culture based on the name of the university alone implied the alignment of Christian values, attitudes, and beliefs with that of the participants. Without expressly knowing the details of the theological background of SNU,

basic participant assumptions included that SNU exists to provide adult education in a Christian atmosphere.

Upon purposeful exposure to the printed SNU mission statement during the focus group session, participants described their perceptions of the explicit way that the university utilized to integrate the mission into the Adult Studies educational experience. Mission integration effectiveness captured through the participants' perceptions provided a mixed perspective. When participants' perceived that mission integration was accomplished, the outcome was positive. When the participants' perceived that mission integration was deficient, the outcome was negative. This was especially true as it relates to instructors, the Biblical Perspectives module, classroom environment, cohort group, voice, and cultural diversity.

For the adult learner, participants perceived instructors as essential to the very heart of the mission integrated educational experience. The emphasis on education within the context of instructor and student relationship was extensive. The instructor was the key to all of the elements for effect mission integration within the educational experience for the learner, weaving course

content with life, intellect, spirit, and university mission.

Participants identified one specific module across all programs as foundational to mission integration. The identification of the Biblical Perspectives module as the most significant program course to link the university mission to the educational experience was explicit. When done well with the masterful instructor and mission-driven content, this module creates an open learning environment in the classroom in which learners are responsive.

Perceptions by participants spoke of a welcoming, supportive, open, and invitational classroom learning environment that sets the tone in which the exploration of course content is safe. The most apprehensive learner is then poised to engage thoughtfully in the learning experience. Critical reflection becomes a natural possibility and the opportunity to find one's voice is set up in this type of learning environment.

Within the context of a respectful relationship between peers and instructors, the participants perceived the opportunity to find their voice as an outcome of a mission integrated educational experience. When discourse and diversity of thought is respected, accepted, encouraged, and expected in the educational process, adult

learners are provided an opportunity to negotiate the very essence of their belief system. When permitted to process aloud, the adult learner finds strength through this process, which results in the form of personal identity and personal power, which is resultant in perceived voice. When this process occurs in the framework of the cohort group, the result is the perception that this educational experience is an integral part of mission integration with emphasis to the enriched cross-cultural community.

Within the open classroom environment, embraced in a supportive cohort group, participants perceived readiness for adult learners to bring the fullness of life into the educational experience. This includes all of the intricate elements of one's person and culture. Participants revealed that the shared culture provides a highly-valued, rich texture to the educational learning experience within the cohort group. This perception by participants, identified as essential, is required for mission integration in the adult programs.

The findings from this study led to conclusions and recommendations that are organized around three major themes. These are mission exposure, mission encounter and



integration, and mission consistency within the framework of adult education.

### Mission Exposure

#### Consumer Choice

Adult prospective educational consumers recognize the educational institution as Christian.

Adult learners have numerous higher educational alternatives to select from when considering personal preferences for their educational needs. The "three factors that influence adult learners above all others are convenience, time, and money" (Bash, 2003, p. 150). When there is not a great deal of difference between the product of one school and another in terms of these three factors, adult learners "will seek other reasons to help them in their selection" (p. 150). In educational decision-making, the university name was the differentiate point in that decision process for SNU. Adult learners determine early that Southern Nazarene University is Christian simply by the word Nazarene as part of the name of the university. To adult learners, it is obvious by the name of the university that there is to some degree a specific Christian heritage or affiliation to the university. The name of the university implies what the university does and who it is. Initially, in the same way, it allows the adult

educational consumer to consider the educational option based on what the name of the university implies.

The name of the university is the actual brand of the educational experience that differentiates the educational experience from all of the other educational options. The brand has actually drawn specific consumers for a closer investigation because of "preference" for the implied offerings (<http://www.strategicniche.com/branding.html>). "Branding is about creating a strong personality or attitude that gives customers permission to prefer your product or service over another—and never letting them forget" it (<http://www.strategicniche.com/branding.html>). Before the adult educational consumer learns anything about the specifics of the university, it is set apart as a Christian brand. The adult learner gravitates towards an organization that conveys an image that is congruent with personal preference. With the Christian brand come numerous implications to the adult learner relationship with the university. Those implications provide opportunities for misinterpretation and educational disappointment. It is the university's responsibility to clarify and define for the adult learner the university's definition of Christian.

## Recommendation for Consumer Choice

Early in the adult learner relationship with the university, it is imperative that the university begin to define Christian for the learner within the context of the specific SNU educational experience. It is crucial that the university explain its definition of the Christian educational experience for the adult learner to avoid misconceptions by the learner. This will help alleviate perceived assumptions by the learner about the learner's personal definition of the Christian educational experience. This clarification process should begin with every encounter with the prospective adult learner in SNU admissions and continue throughout the life of the educational experience with SNU. The provision of information to the adult learner about what it means to be engaging in the unique SNU Christian educational experience should be consistent. All staff and leadership should be able to articulate the SNU definition of the Christian educational experience with reinforcement provided in print perhaps in the form of a brochure and on the SNU Adult Studies web site. The definition of Christian must be public in the context of the SNU educational experience in order for the adult learner to avoid misconceptions.

## Decision-Making

Adult prospective educational consumers desire mission information for decision-making.

Adult learners choose to attend a higher educational institution for a variety of emotional, personal, professional, and social reasons. This choice provides the adult learner with the decision-making power to select a higher educational institution that aligns with the learner's personal motivation and mission or not to select an institution deemed inadequate or unsatisfactory. As consumers, university mission is very specific information that adult learners may utilize in higher educational institution selection.

As adult learners take control of their learning process, they make central choices that lead them to the emancipation of their human potential (Knowles, 1980, pp. 67-68). The andragogical model presumes that adults are active learners involved in all stages of the learning process from higher education selection to evaluation. In andragogy, learners are the directors of their learning processes and needs. The content of the university mission provides insight into the heart motivation of the university at the very moment when the adult learner may be seeking educational options aligned with highly personal

motivations. The reasons behind the adult learner's choice is highly personal and is contained in "the meaning of the decision" for that adult learner (Rogers, 1969, p. 268). Contained within that single "free and responsible choice" to attend a specific educational institution, based on what is understood in regard to university mission, may rest the "deepest elements underlying change" for that learner within the context of the learning experience (p. 268).

As consumers, adult learners in search of an educational opportunity will choose from a smorgasbord of educational options based on access, convenience, cost, cause, and effect. In addition, they will also choose educational options based on highly subjective reasons. Contained in adult learners' free choice for an educational option, is an addition to all the known cause and effect, and it exists "in a different dimension than the determined sequence of cause and effect" (p. 269). This counterpart or addition rests within the "freedom which exists in the subjective person, a freedom which he courageously uses to live his potentialities" (p. 269). Within the prospective adult learner's decision-making choice for higher education lie objective and subjective reasons for that specific choice.

Adult-learner consumers know that a university mission statement is a glimpse into the heart of the university. University mission statements are "carefully crafted projections of practice intentions, providing evidence of what an institution thinks of itself and where it is going" (Usher, Bryant, & Johnston, 1997, p. 62). Mission statements "are constructed with both an inner and outer eye" (p. 64). For the university they establish a "framework for practice" (p. 64). The availability of the university mission for decision-making purposes provides information to the adult learner necessary for informed choice.

#### Recommendation for Decision-Making

In light of the coming age of education as business, to understand and appreciate the objective and subjective elements of the adult learner as consumer is not an option. If the desire to remain in education is the goal, then the business of education is a requirement. In an increasingly competitive educational market for the Christian higher educational institution offering adult-degree completion programs, mission prominence may be one way to become more distinctive. Consequently, SNU must become more overt in making the university mission readily available to prospective adult learners seeking information about the

university mission. Adult learners' self-concepts are very valuable to their learning processes, and "adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions, for their own lives" (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998, p. 65). The very core principles of andragogy "go beyond basic respect for the learner and view the adult learner as a primary source of data for making sound decisions regarding the learning process" (p. 183).

The communication of the university mission should be available both formally and informally to all prospective adult learners. A prominent direct link to the university mission from the SNU adult studies web page would be one way to become more overt in the mission access effort. The incorporation of university mission into the standard information packet provided to all prospective adult degree-completion program learners would easily accommodate decision-making requirements. The SNU Adult Studies Information Meetings also provides an excellent opportunity for Admission Program Representatives to address directly all questions about the university mission. Thus, university mission provides information to adult higher educational consumers for educational decision-making.

## Understanding the Institutional Culture

Adult learners desire mission information to understand the institutional culture in the context of the educational experience.

Higher education chosen by the adult learner within the context of a distinctive educational culture is an education driven by a distinctive mission resultant in a distinctive educational experience. Therefore, a SNU degree-completion educational experience for the adult learner is within the context of a unique educational culture. The culture of an organization encompasses "commonly held values, attitudes, and beliefs that drive the behavior of the people who work in the organization" (Tracy, 2002, p. 199). This unique culture shapes the adult learner's experiences with the university. The SNU culture reveals itself in all the ways that instructors relate, leadership makes decisions, and staff engages with learners. Culture "pervades everything about an organization" (p. 199). In addition to adult education processes, the distinctive SNU culture makes the educational experience unique for the adult learner.

The adult learner begins the educational experience with SNU as a higher education consumer. Some adult learners because of the positive nature of the educational experience, within the context of the SNU culture, desire



additional information about who SNU is and why the SNU experience is the way that it is. Other adult learners because of the way that they perceive their purposeful association with the university as an extension of their own life history desire additional clarification about the university. The adult learner appears to sometime agree and state, "How is it possible for us to work in a community without feeling the spirit of the culture that has been there for many years, without trying to understand the soul of the culture?" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 131). This position appears to be a natural outcome for some students because of exposure and involvement with the SNU educational community. This shift occurs when the adult learner begins to see SNU as part of the learner's extended identity and because of the association chosen for the educational experience.

#### Recommendation for Understanding the Institutional Culture

"Every organization, regardless of how enlightened, claims to have lofty values" (Tracy, 2002, p. 202), and SNU is no different. SNU has a story, but the "real story of a company's culture can be told by its employees" (p. 202). "Stories told at day's end create a shared history, linking people in time and event" (McAdams, 1993, p. 28). Adult learners at SNU begin to see themselves as part of the

present SNU story and to appreciate their place in the SNU story; they desire to understand what their newly found SNU history is. Program leaders must make efforts to be the SNU storytellers verbally by weaving themselves consistently formally and informally throughout the adult learners' educational experience. Purposeful exchanges with adult learners will provide the opportunity for meaningful connections and the construction of "dynamic narratives that render sensible and coherent the seeming chaos of human existence" (p. 166). In addition, it is critical to help bridge the adult learner's current association with SNU to SNU's historical foundation with the presentation of the historical account of SNU, its theological heritage and denominational position, and its current place in the world. This addition should be a part of the standard program module curriculum and especially in the Biblical Perspectives module.

### Mission Encounter and Integration

#### Instructors

Instructors are essential to mission integration.

Mission can be communicated through effective teaching practices.

Instructors possess much of the responsibility for successful mission integration in the Christian college

classroom. They are not only responsible for course learning objectives, but they have the opportunity to engage with students "intellectually, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually" (Dockery & Gushee, 1999, p. 43). Instructors bring not only their subject expertise to the classroom, but they also bring specific "values, perspective, and point of view" (p. 34). The instructor in the adult-centered classroom not only understands adult education and adult learning principles but also facilitates the "learners' greater authenticity, and that affirms and attends to their cultural identity and spirituality, and that attends to their critical thinking about the subject matter of the course" (Tisdell, 2003, pp. 240-241). Instructor responsibility for successful mission integration is vital.

Through the educational experience, "students want to find their voices, speak their voices, have their voices heard" (Palmer, 1998, p. 46). "A good teacher is one who can listen to those voices even before they have spoken—so that someday they can speak with truth and confidence" (p. 46). A good instructor creates space for the learner, is aware of the learner, pays attention to the learner, and honors the learner (p. 46). A good instructor enters empathetically into the learner's world so that the learner

perceives the instructor "as someone who has the promise of being able to hear another person's truth" (p. 46). In order to provide mutual respect, an instructor must "make participants feel that they are valued as separate, unique individuals deserving of respect" (Brookfield, 1986, p. 13). Adult learners engaged with instructors in this type of open learning environment are more likely to bring their unique culture to the learning experience.

This type of learning environment is somewhat easier to create "in situations with groups that have an ongoing relationship that has developed over time, such as in cohort programs" (Tisdell, 2003, p. 250). In cohort groups, "there is often greater trust in such groups, which makes dealing with issues at a deeper level over time easier" (p. 250). An environment beneficial to learning is "perhaps the single most critical thing" that is accomplished by a facilitator of learning (Knowles, 1980, p. 224). In the adult learning environment with the creation of the student-centered atmosphere where democracy, trust, mutual respect, active listening, friendliness, and cooperation is practiced, the opportunity for trust to develop is enhanced (p. 224). The instructor upholds the key responsibility for the control and design of the learning environment, which encourages prescribed,

designed learner behaviors (Conti & Fellenz, 1991, p. 21). Within the instructor-learner relationship one of the "principal tasks as educators is to expand the imagination about our possibilities" (Jackson, 1996, p. 96). Course content, explored in cohort groups that is "transformative and culturally relevant and also grounded in spirit" is course content delivered by an excellent instructor (Tisdell, 2003, p. 250). Instructors are at the heart of mission integration in the adult degree-completion programs.

#### Recommendations for Instructors

Instructor "skills are critical in determining success for the learner" (Bash, 2003, p. 159). It is imperative to note that in the classroom exists "many issues that can only be addressed by the individual professor" (p. 159).

Great teachers not only transmit information but also create the common ground of intellectual commitment. They stimulate active not passive learning in the classroom, encourage students to be creative, not conforming, and inspire them to go on learning. (Boyer, 1990, p. 12)

The role of the instructor is crucial to the classroom climate, learning transactions with the students, and mission integration. All new instructors should be required to participate in a comprehensive orientation process that will help them connect with the institution

and prepare them to be successful in the adult classroom. Consistent and on-going adjunct faculty development should be required for all instructors participating in the SNU adult degree-completion programs. Faculty orientation and on-going faculty development should revolve around six content areas:

1. SNU Mission and Mission Integration, history, culture, values, future
2. Adjunct faculty Integration with SNU
3. SNU Adult Studies procedures, expectations, policies, system navigation
4. Adult learners, andragogy, classroom climate, learner voice, cultural appreciation, teaching methods, instructional strategies, learning strategies, learning styles, learning techniques, communication, facilitative teaching, student assessment and evaluation, teaching for success, adult development, adult education and adult learner resources
5. Instructor human resources, relationship, needs and problem solving
6. Technology and media integration

Adjunct instructor development will become increasingly important as the SNU Adult Studies programs and satellite campuses continue to grow. The successful integration of mission within the Adult Studies programs rests directly with SNU adjunct faculty. Program leaders must intentionally educate the adjunct faculty in regards to university mission, history, culture, values, and future direction if it is to be communicated to adult learners in the classroom. This content must be public, available, and

recognizable if Adult Studies is to be mission driven. This information cannot be communicated to the adult learner if the instructor does not possess the information. In addition to workshop or seminar continuing education, the provision of books, periodicals, articles, websites, and other resources should be consistently provided to all adjunct faculty. The use of mentoring relationships with program leaders and full-time faculty for informal discussion will also provide an avenue for clarification and education.

Every effort to strengthen relationship ties with adjunct instructors in order for them to see themselves as part of the SNU community is essential. It is necessary to cultivate opportunities for SNU community integration through social events, extra-curricular activities, and recognition opportunities. Recognize one adjunct instructor with an outstanding achievement award each year at the annual President's Dinner. Spotlight adjunct instructor stories and achievements in a public area for adult learners and university personnel to be informed. Regularly communicate with adjunct instructors through a print or electronic newsletter with the inclusion of university event information. Every effort to integrate adjunct instructors into the life of the university will

encourage a greater sense of SNU community for the adjunct instructor.

The Adult Studies procedures and processes will become increasingly complex with growth. It is imperative that instructors receive current, clear, and repeated instruction on those procedures and processes. They are on the front line with adult learners, attempting to satisfy information needs, and attempting to be responsive to the needs of the university dually. In order for this to be accomplished, instructors must have this information readily available for themselves and for the adult learner as the work within the Adult Studies system. This type of information can be continuously provided through all communication efforts with the adjunct faculty.

In adult education, the adult learner is central in all intentions and purposes to everything that is under consideration or actually accomplished. Program leaders must provide quality adult education continuing education for all adjunct instructors. Program leaders must provide constant attention to instructors on behalf of the adult learner's needs and expectations in the classroom. In order for adult education to be accomplished well in the classroom, program leaders have a responsibility to provide opportunities for instructors to receive continuing



education on adult education and the adult learner. This initiative is paramount to a successful adult degree-completion program.

It is important to cultivate community within the ranks of the adjunct instructors. Program leaders must purposefully build in opportunities for instructors to meet and interact with one another for problem solving, resource sharing, and relationship. This can be done formally across module content specialization areas and informally through a stocked adjunct instructor refreshment area. Adjunct instructors can feel as though they operate in isolation unless program leaders intentionally cultivate ways for instructors to interact with one another. Program leaders must work to provide the reason and opportunities for both formal and informal exchanges between instructors in order to cultivate relationship.

Technology and media will increasingly become a part of the adult learner's educational experience. Program leaders must work to give their instructors the educational tools and skill proficiency to expertly navigate technological classroom requirements in order to meet the adult learner's needs. Technology continuing education is no longer optional it should be considered a standard practice for all adult education instructors.

Technological proficiency should be encouraged and supported by program leaders. If a technology is offered at the university and made available or expected for use by the adult learner then all instructors should be provided opportunity for technological education for improvement and skill development.

### Biblical Perspectives

The Biblical Perspectives module is foundational to mission integration in Christian adult degree-completion programs.

Across all SNU Adult Studies programs, the Biblical Perspectives course is the cornerstone module on which mission integration squarely rests. The Wesleyan theological perspective and the Church of the Nazarene foundational roots are overviewed as part of the curriculum in this module. It is currently the only point in which the adult learner receives this purposeful exposure. When accomplished well, it attends to the informational needs of the adult learner who seeks clarification on the newly acquired SNU heritage by association requirements. When learning objectives are attended to, this module explains SNU culture and invites the rich cross-cultural perspectives associated with religion. For the adult learner, it establishes the context and the unique Christian lens in which SNU provides education and looks at

the world. As programs currently exist, it is a pivotal module in order for adult learners to perceive mission integration within the framework of the Adult Studies degree-completion programs and educational experience.

This particular module also provides another crucial opportunity for adult learners. It provides a chance to "reflect on their religious and spiritual background" (Tisdell, 2003, p. 104). Many adult learners "who believe that spirituality is important to them will spiral back to 're-member' the life-enhancing elements of their religious tradition and their culture of origin while developing a more meaningful adult spirituality" (p. 104). Although "most adults as they develop either move away or question their childhood religious tradition (if they grew up in one)", this "reclaiming and 're-membering' earlier aspects of one's foundational spirituality seems to be a pattern" among adults (p. 104). "Even those who never really return to their childhood religious traditions spiral back at times in their own spiritual development" (p. 105). In educational pursuits, wrestling with "complexities can bring about changes in how people understand aspects of their world and themselves; such changes become, in turn, the framework for new beliefs and actions" (Taylor, Marienau, & Fiddler, 2000, p. 10). When

accomplished well, the Biblical Perspectives module provides the perfect occasion for adult learners to engage in the process of reclaiming, "re-membering," or simply exploring their own spiritual development. This adult learner process is a direct link to successful mission integration.

#### Recommendations for Biblical Perspectives

Because the Biblical Perspectives modules is crucial to mission integration, extreme care should be given to the elements of instructor preparation and selection, curriculum content, and classroom climate. The successful integration of all three elements is essential for a quality Biblical Perspectives educational experience for the adult learner. It is important to acknowledge that "spiritual development always takes place in a cultural, gendered, and historical context and happens over time" (Tisdell, 2003, p. 117). With that in mind, the SNU educational experience inclusive of the Biblical Perspectives modules is a certain period within the context of a shared historical context with every SNU adult learner. SNU has the privilege to share in the adult learner's spiritual development within the context of the educational experience. For a Christian university, this is a sacred trust that must not be taken lightly. How

adult learners experience environmental interactions is "influenced by how they perceive and make sense of the events that make up that experience" (Taylor, Marienau, & Fiddler, 2000, p. 11). All Biblical Perspectives instructors must be seasoned master instructors with a strong knowledge base, with superior understanding of the adult learner, and with excellent skills in the development of an open positive classroom climate for the adult learner. Serious attention should be given to the curriculum of the Biblical Perspectives module with the emphasis on content consistency throughout all programs. Since the SNU Religion Department has jurisdiction and control over instructor approval and the Biblical Perspective module content, a close interdependent relationship should be cultivated between the Adult Studies program leadership and the Religion Department for monitoring this course. This relationship is essential to a quality Biblical Perspectives module educational experience for all SNU adult learners.

#### Mission Consistency

Mission integration is a communication tool

Mission integration must be purposeful

Mission integration must be intentional across all educational programs

Mission influences adult educational practice

## Mission Possible

The adult higher educational consumer expects a mission-driven adult educational experience. The educational consumer is informed. As a consumer, the adult learner purposefully selects the specific context of the desired educational experience. When an organization is clear, about who they are and what they want to be in the mind of their consumer, and every aspect of their business is managed with that consumer in mind, and that consumer sees the organization as being distinctive, than that organization has communicated clearly, who they are (Tracy, 2002, p. 222). Today, the educational consumer chooses the higher educational institution that not only provides adult education but also provides it in the milieu of the consumer's choice. Therefore, it is imperative that higher educational institutions meet the expectations of the educational consumer within the context or the educational experience consistently. Adult higher educational consumers who choose Christian adult degree-completion programs are knowingly acceptant of the fact that these programs are Christian. Today the Christian adult degree-completion program is not the only educational option that is available. At the point of higher education selection, the adult learner has deliberately chosen the Christian

educational environment. Program leadership, aware of this fact, in addition to providing a quality adult education experience, must attend purposefully to mission integration across all programs, campuses, curricula, adjunct faculty development, and the entire business of adult education.

Today is a different day in Christian adult degree-completion programs. The adult educational consumer is well informed and fully aware of the educational market. At the point of informed choice, adult higher educational consumers want adult education their way, and some consumers want it in the context that Christian education provides. Adult learners choosing adult education within the Christian context want and expect mission integration. Adult learners want mission integration consistently throughout the life of the educational experience. They want the perceived gifts attached to the educational experience that only Christian adult degree-completion programs can provide. If the adult educational consumer did not want it, they would not select it. There are other options today for adult degree-completion higher education. The adult degree-completion higher educational consumers, who have chosen the Christian context for their education, want Christian higher educational institutions with adult degree-completion programs to be who they are, and to be it

consistently. In order for a Christian higher educational institution with adult degree-completion programs to be, who they are requires intentional mission integration. Successful mission integration requires program leadership to provide consistent purposeful attention to mission integration across all adult-degree completion programs throughout the life of the educational experience for the adult learner. Mission integration is possible in Christian adult degree-completion programs.

#### Fulfilling the Mission

Southern Nazarene University Adult Studies stands in the crossroads as it embraces the past and looks to the future. The Adult Studies degree-completion programs are coming of age. As a department of the university, Adult Studies is an established presence. As a resource for the university, it is life giving. Adult Studies and its adult learners are an intricate part of the business of education at SNU. The adult learners have appreciated their educational opportunity with SNU through its Adult Studies programs. As adult learners, they have knowingly chosen their adult educational experience within the context of a Christian university. The adult learners have made their voice heard. They give Adult Studies acquiescence to be mission driven. Adult Studies program leaders hold in



their hands, the opportunity to determine exactly what it could mean to be mission driven. The establishment of an Advisory Council consisting of class representatives, Adult Studies adjunct faculty, program leadership, traditional faculty, and outside representation from industry would make sure both mission and educational needs are met. An Advisory Council could provide crucial input and monitoring to assure mission integration. There presently exists an opportunity that has never existed before in the Adult Studies. When done well with the establishment of specific mission integration ground rules, processes, and procedures, Adult Studies will not only be able to provide leadership to other educational departments at Southern Nazarene University on successful mission integration, but also to other educational institutions. This is an indispensable opportunity for Adult Studies to establish the model for successful institutional mission integration. Further research is recommended throughout undergraduate and graduate educational programs to determine the state of institutional mission integration as perceived by their consumers with the utilization of the team approach to qualitative research.

## Commencement

Adult learners who have completed academic requirements participate in a ceremony traditionally known as Commencement. Such a ceremony reflects not merely the end of coursework and academic requirements; it serves as a starting-point for the beginning of each learner's post-graduate life. Commencement rites celebrate the learner's individual endeavors as well as serve as a transition to the next level of learning and academic development. Southern Nazarene University is like a learner at commencement poised at the cusp of an important milestone. The university and Adult Studies leaders have important decisions to make and implement. They could take the more traditional path of adult degree-completion education as it is now done or program leadership could choose to recreate the adult degree-completion educational experience in the context of mission for themselves and for the adult learners. With the knowledge that mission integration is possible, the responsibility to act on that knowledge rests with program leadership. It is now time to determine what is at the very heart of the Adult Studies educational experience for program leadership and the adult learners. If mission is the heartbeat of a university, there is an opportunity for Adult Studies program leaders to determine

the heart that will beat and resonate throughout all Adult Studies programs from this moment forward. The Adult Studies history is as it is, but the opportunity exists in this moment to write the legacy for its future.

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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval

**Oklahoma State University  
Institutional Review Board**

Protocol Expires: 11/2/2004

Date: Monday, November 03, 2003

IRB Application No ED0452

Proposal Title: Educational Experiences and the Christian College Mission: Perceptions of Learners in Adult Degree Completion Programs

Principal Investigator(s):

Delilah G. Joiner  
1062 Dover Mansion  
Yukon, OK 73099

Gary J Conti  
206 Willard  
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and  
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

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Dear PI :

Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact me in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, colson@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Carol Olson, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

VITA

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Delilah G. Joiner

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: Educational Experiences and the Christian College  
Mission: Perceptions of Learners in Adult  
Degree-Completion Programs

Major Field: Occupational and Adult Education

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Walters High School,  
Walters, Oklahoma in May of 1977; received Bachelor  
of Arts degree in Social Science Secondary  
Education from Southern Nazarene University in May  
1981; Received a Master of Education in Counseling  
Psychology from the University of Central Oklahoma  
in May 1987. Completed the requirements for the  
Doctor of Education degree with a major in  
Occupational and Adult Education at Oklahoma State  
University in December, 2003.

Experience: Family Studies and Gerontology Program  
Director in the Southern Nazarene University (SNU)  
School of Adult Studies, 1995 to present; Academic  
Advisor for Alternative and Prior Learning, 1989 to  
Present; SNU Faculty member, 1994 to present;  
Adjunct SNU Psychology faculty, 1988 to present;  
SNU Practicum Coordinator, 1986 to present;

Professional Memberships: Christian Adult Higher  
Education Association, Beta Epsilon Chapter of  
Sigma Phi Omega, Society for the Study of  
Wesleyan Theology, The Council for Adult and  
Experiential Learning, Society of Alpha Sigma  
Lambda