



Foreword to Report of Reformed Tradition Working Group

September 2017

This report reflects the dedicated efforts of a working group created by the Davidson College Board of Trustees in October 2016. The board asked the group's members to explore how Davidson's grounding in and relationship to the Reformed Tradition finds expression (both directly and indirectly) today on campus. The college's mission, for example, reflects that connection, as Davidson cultivates humane instincts, and creative and disciplined minds for lives of leadership and service. The Board requested this report as part of its ongoing commitment to educating the board and the broader Davidson community about the college's relationship with the Reformed Tradition.

The group membership was: Ann Hayes Browning '79, Trustee Emerita; the Rev. Lewis Galloway '73, Trustee; Stephanie Glaser '92, Associate Vice President for Campus and Community Relations; Dr. John Kuykendall '59, President Emeritus; Dr. Doug Ottati, Craig Family Distinguished Professor of Reformed Theology and Justice; the Rev. Rob Spach '84, College Chaplain; and Elizabeth Welliver '16, Chaplain's Office Fellow.

The Board received the report of the working group, titled "Reflections on the Reformed Tradition at Davidson College" at its April 4, 2017 meeting, and discussed it then and at the August 8, 2017 Board retreat.

The report provides observations on the college's Statement of Purpose and includes a wealth of information about how the Reformed Tradition finds expression today at Davidson, which is a broadly diverse, pluralistic community of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends. We share the report with the college community so that all may have access to this information.

Carol E. Quillen

President

The Rev. Rob Spach '84

College Chaplain

Reflections on the Reformed Tradition at Davidson College

Presented to the Trustees of Davidson College on April 4, 2017

Executive Summary

The word tradition refers to the activity of practices, ideas, and beliefs passing down from generation to generation. Traditions emerge at particular places and times, and they reflect their originating commitments and contexts. Nevertheless, they do not stand still. They maintain continuities, but they also change and develop as living communities engage evolving circumstances and realities. This clearly is true of the two major topics of concern here: Reformed Protestantism and liberal arts education.

Until the 1950s, Davidson's ties to the Presbyterian Church (US) and the Reformed Tradition played a defining role not only in its institutional mission and identity but also in the daily life of students, faculty, and staff at the College. This religious tradition was a locus of power on campus. It set the tone and vision for the curriculum, faculty culture, and the spiritual life of the College community.

Today, the role of the Reformed Tradition at Davidson has shifted significantly. It no longer operates from "above" (by using explicitly religious categories to exercise power over and normative influence upon College policies, the curriculum, and faculty expectations). Instead, its influence is from "below." The tradition shapes the College's ethos and undergirds a set of values and a vision that benefit the entire College community in a quiet but pervasive way.

Our five-month study has revealed that while many aspects of Davidson College may be found at other institutions of higher education, our Reformed Tradition heritage has shaped a particular constellation of priorities on campus. This constellation includes:

- ◆ an education that cultivates humane values and prepares students to lead and serve for the common good guided by a moral compass (which may differ from one individual to another);
- ◆ academic excellence and an unfettered quest for truth rooted in intellectual rigor and broad learning;
- ◆ an honor code that creates a community of integrity and trust;
- ◆ an ethos in which the dignity and worth of each person is clearly affirmed;
- ◆ openness to and respect for diversity and differences of religion, worldview, and opinion;
- ◆ development of the whole person, body, mind, and spirit, in a residential community setting;
- ◆ an emphasis on personal relationships as vital to human flourishing;
- ◆ an aspiration to continually being reformed in ways that thoughtfully draw upon a particular heritage and shared values so as to positively engage current realities.

Davidson graduates face an increasingly complex, pluralistic, global world that requires integrity, empathy, an understanding of diverse cultures, and astute communication skills to bridge differences and find common ground in the gray spaces between ideological extremes. Davidson's expressions of Reformed Tradition principles through this constellation of priorities are particularly relevant and critical for leaders in today's world.

The College's Governance and the Reformed Tradition

Davidson College is governed by a Board of Trustees whose specific authority is contained within the College's by-laws. The Trustees promulgated a constitution to guide the governance of the College. Both the by-laws and constitution make explicit references to Davidson's faith heritage.

Beyond the mechanics of governance, though, some aspects of the College's approach to governing reflect certain emphases of the Reformed Tradition. Its structure has clear and distinct roles for different stakeholders, with collaboration balanced with a healthy tension of discourse. The Reformed Tradition favors participation in governance over hierarchy. Each constituency of the College community can expect to be valued and respected as a voice in issues critical to the health and future of the College. Thus, the College attempts in its governance to do things "decently and in order."

At the heart of Davidson College's self-understanding is the Statement of Purpose, which also serves as the preamble to the College's constitution. On February 19, 1963, Davidson's first Statement of Purpose was unanimously approved by the Trustees. Since then, the Statement has undergone both slight and significant changes, most recently in 1994 and in 2005. Each of the seven paragraphs of Davidson's current Statement of Purpose arguably contains direct relevance to our understanding of the relationship between the College's educational mission and the Reformed Tradition.

Comments on the Statement of Purpose and the Reformed Tradition

i.

Davidson College is an institution of higher learning established in 1837 by Presbyterians of North Carolina. Since its founding, the ties that bind the college to its Presbyterian heritage, including the historic understanding of Christian faith called The Reformed Tradition, have remained close and strong. The college is committed to continuing this vital relationship.

The first paragraph affirms the historic and continuing commitment of the College to its Christian heritage via the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Reformed Tradition. Education has been a priority for people in the Reformed Tradition since its earliest days. Significantly, Davidson's identity is as an institution of higher education, not as an instrument of any religious denomination. The College is voluntarily related to a faith tradition that affirms the need for institutions to be "re-formed" over time. This living tradition spurs the College's pursuit of new ways to faithfully and respectfully engage current intellectual, social, and cultural realities.

ii.

The primary purpose of Davidson College is to assist students in developing humane instincts and disciplined and creative minds for lives of leadership and service. In fulfilling its purpose, Davidson has chosen to be a liberal arts college, to maintain itself as a residential community of scholars, to emphasize the teaching responsibility of all professors, and to ensure the opportunity for personal relationships between students and teachers. Further, Davidson believes it is vital that all students in every class know and study under mature and scholarly teachers who are able and eager to provide for each of them stimulation, instruction, and guidance.

The second paragraph of the Statement, which includes the oft-quoted phrase about the College's primary purpose, relates to the Reformed Tradition in at least four ways. First, while Davidson is committed to rigorous academic inquiry, it does not privilege intellect above all; humane instincts are at least as important as disciplined and creative minds. Second, the Reformed Tradition emphasizes God's concern for our life together characterized by social justice, freedom, and peace; consequently, graduates should use their gifts of leadership to serve the common good. Third, a liberal arts education is not simply about acquiring knowledge, but about doing so in the context of the personal relationships students form with one another and with teachers and mentors. Fourth, and in a way that integrates the preceding three categories, a Davidson education can help students not only to prepare for a career but to become attuned to a "calling" (or, to use Reformed language, a "vocation"). Drawing on one's gifts, abilities, values, and joys in order to live into a particular way of serving in God's good world may in fact be the ultimate end-goal of assisting students "in developing humane instincts, and disciplined and creative minds for lives of leadership and service."

iii.

The Christian tradition to which Davidson remains committed recognizes God as the source of all truth, and believes that Jesus Christ is the revelation of that God, a God bound by no church or creed. The loyalty of the college thus extends beyond the Christian community to the whole of humanity and necessarily includes openness to and respect for the world's various religious traditions. Davidson dedicates itself to the quest for truth and encourages teachers and students to explore the whole of reality, whether physical or spiritual, with unlimited employment of their intellectual powers. At Davidson, faith and reason work together in mutual respect and benefit toward growth in learning, understanding, and wisdom.

The third paragraph articulates explicitly theological dimensions of the religious tradition undergirding the College's purpose. Since all truth springs from God in the Reformed understanding, the search for truth in a context of intellectual freedom is a bedrock value. While affirming that Jesus Christ discloses God, the Reformed Tradition insists that no community or tradition – whether rooted in faith or in reason – can assert exclusive, comprehensive claims to experience of the Divine or to possessing truth, the Christian tradition included. All human expressions of truth are provisional, limited by historical and cultural circumstances. Consequently, as an educational institution committed to the search for truth wherever it may be found, the College's loyalty and respect extend to all people, and it embraces religious and worldview diversity not in spite of its grounding in the Reformed Tradition, but because of it.

iv.

As a college that welcomes students, faculty, and staff from a variety of nationalities, ethnic groups, and traditions, Davidson values diversity, recognizing the dignity and worth of every person. Therefore, Davidson provides a range of opportunities for worship, civil debate, and teaching that enrich mind and spirit. Further, Davidson challenges students to engage in service to prepare themselves for lives of growth and giving.

Intentional engagement with diversity is encouraged by the fourth paragraph of the Statement of Purpose. This commitment arises from the Reformed principle that every person is equally created in the image of God and is invested with dignity and worth that cannot be abrogated and should not be disregarded. Moreover, since Davidson is a college, not an arm of any church or political party, it appropriately provides varied opportunities for worship or other spiritual practices, the thoughtful exchange of ideas, and civic engagement among students, faculty, and staff for their own well-being and for the common good.

Davidson seeks students of good character and high academic ability, irrespective of economic circumstances, who share its values and show promise for usefulness to society. In the selection of faculty, the college seeks men and women who respect the purpose of the college, who are outstanding intellectually, who have the best training available in their fields of study, and whose interest in students and teaching is unfeigned and profound. The Trustees commit to being faithful stewards of the traditions of the college. They are charged with governing under the Constitution and By-laws and with providing the financial resources necessary for adequate student aid and appropriate facilities and programs, including furnishing the faculty with the time and opportunity for creative scholarship fundamental to the best teaching.

Reformed values such as personal integrity, economic justice, and the importance of human relationships in teaching and learning inform this fifth paragraph of the Statement. It specifically mentions the characteristics of people welcomed to the community that Davidson seeks to create: students of good character and academic ability, without regard to socio-economic status, and well-trained faculty who ensure that these students' education is intellectually rigorous and genuinely personal. Furthermore, the Trustees have the right, privilege, and obligation to be the stewards not only of the College's finances, but also of its values and commitments, including its relationship to the Church and the Reformed Tradition.

As a liberal arts college, Davidson emphasizes those studies, disciplines, and activities that are mentally, spiritually, and physically liberating. Thus, the college concentrates upon the study of history, literature and languages, philosophy and religion, music, drama and the visual arts, the natural and social sciences, and mathematics. The college encourages student engagement with other cultures through domestic and international studies. The college also requires physical education, provides for competitive athletics, and encourages a variety of social, cultural, and service activities. While Davidson prepares many of its students for graduate and professional study, it intends to teach all students to think clearly, to make relevant and valid judgments, to discriminate among values, and to communicate freely with others in the realm of ideas.

This sixth paragraph appropriately returns to the holistic vision of a Davidson education, which is fundamentally shaped by the Reformed Tradition's appreciation for humanistic learning in the arts and sciences. While classroom and lab are at the center of this education, encounters with other cultures and peoples are essential in our globalized context. Moreover, a Reformed understanding of humanity emphasizes that an education is incomplete apart from a range of experiences that nurture spirit and body as well as mind. As a whole, this kind of education should inform the development of character, values, intellectual liveliness, good judgment, and communication skills.

Davidson holds a priceless heritage bequeathed by those who have dedicated their lives and their possessions for its welfare. To it much has been entrusted, and of it much is required.

These closing sentences of the Statement of Purpose serve as both a reminder and a charge to those responsible for the ongoing vitality of Davidson College.

Embodiments, Opportunities, and Challenges

As noted in this report's Executive Summary, while many specific features of the College's life may be found at other institutions of higher education, Davidson College's Reformed heritage has shaped a particular constellation of priorities.

Five historic affirmations of Reformed Protestantism ground these emphases in ways that are especially significant for liberal arts colleges. (1) God the Creator and Redeemer, the source of all good and truth, creates all people in God's image. (2) True wisdom consists of knowledge of God, the world, and ourselves. (3) The arts and sciences are gifts of God. (4) The calling and vocation of human beings is to love God and neighbor. (5) This calling is enacted in compassionate lives committed to social justice and civic engagement.

All five of these affirmations shape Davidson College from "below" as it faces current opportunities and challenges. The following is an explication of how those values are applicable in four important areas of the College's life.

1. The Academic Program

The academic program at Davidson reflects the sort of commitment to scholarship and free inquiry that finds a basis in Reformed understandings of true wisdom, as well as the affirmation that truth should be respected wherever it is found. Consequently, the arts and sciences are gifts to be cultivated and appreciated. The Reformed Tradition values the humanities as studies of the human self-understandings that come to expression in cultural artifacts and practices, e.g., literature, drama, philosophy, religion, politics, art, and various social structures. In a Reformed perspective, the sciences help put us in touch with the excellence of God's good creation, even as they promise to advance human flourishing. These studies contribute to diverse professional pursuits, but have worth primarily because they explore the richness and the depth of human life, and so enhance the lives of those who participate in them.

Educating the whole person involves more than training the intellect; it also involves training the knower's interests and commitments. This inevitably influences his or her values, character, and behavior. Again, because Reformed believing envisions an expansive human calling (love of God and neighbor, or attention to the broadest "public good"), preparation for responsible living does not reduce to intellectual training but involves the person's other capacities as well. Indeed, when people pursue more particular callings or vocations, say as physicians, lawyers, parents, or teachers, the Reformed Tradition construes these as lines of responsibility through which they serve others with their minds, hearts, and wills.

The spirit of inquiry finds embodiment at Davidson in a number of very basic structures, such as curricula, classes, teaching, and provisions for scholarship and research. In addition, this approach informs some of the foundational arrangements of the academic enterprise that deserve special and continuous attention, from maintaining professorships, classrooms, laboratories, and community-based instruction to the library, sabbaticals, public presentations, and less formal but regular conversations.

Our curriculum and structure acknowledge that our graduates enter a deeply complicated world in which religion is a major force in national and global politics. The liberal arts curriculum approaches this from a variety of viewpoints. The Religious Studies Department, for example, includes scholars who engage in the "scientific" study of religions, their histories, and institutions, as well as scholars who study the normative visions or "theologies" of several traditions. Practically speaking, this means professorships dedicated to the study of Asian religious traditions, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and religion and science. A professorship in Reformed theology and justice embodies an emphasis on the Reformed Tradition, as does an occasional visiting professorship in Reformed theology and ethics.

Faculty teach a growing number of community-based learning courses, which connect academic work with direct experience meeting a community-defined need. Public and non-profit partners deliver real world issues that challenge students' intellect and cultivate creativity to affect change. Currently, 27 such courses are offered across 14 different academic departments.

Additionally, a growing emphasis on supporting students' intellectual engagement with social issues is demonstrated in the curriculum by the new Justice, Equality and Community distribution requirement. These academic initiatives reflect the Reformed Tradition's understanding of education to engage society, particularly as a range of competencies are required of students in a globalized world.

Today, these commitments and embodiments encounter distinctive challenges and opportunities. We are reminded almost daily that there are those in our society, both conservative and progressive, who would separate faith and reason. Moreover, current commercial emphases on the utility of higher education for the accumulation of wealth focus attention on preparation for professions and jobs but devalue deeper reflections on human self-understandings and the good life that are characteristic of the humanities. In the humanities there is also the issue of "canon and curriculum." How can we reflect *in depth* on the many particularities, the many human communities and traditions, without *limiting inappropriately* the particularities we engage? Can we resist doing everything superficially and also resist inappropriate foreclosures of literatures, traditions, and ideas?

Again, though we embrace diversity, since truth tends to be more fully known when it is pursued from many perspectives, we also recognize that challenges associated with diversity raise important questions for scholarship and study. Historically, liberal arts colleges have often excluded certain groups, e.g., persons of color and those that come from families with limited resources. How can the College effectively address the different cultural and educational backgrounds of its students? As a matter of fairness, how can we make a Davidson education more widely available? As a matter of relevant and timely education, how can we fashion a more diverse College community?

2. Campus Life

The breadth and texture of community life at any small residential college provides a significant context for personal growth. In Davidson's case, the fact that the College has been related to the Reformed Tradition since its founding has provided a distinct ambience for the development of values and attitudes which can echo through a lifetime.

The campus itself—its size, its facilities and services, even perhaps its physical setting—draws people together in a centripetal fashion. This is not to say that Davidson is or ought to be an "ivory tower" entity in isolation from the larger society. It does mean, however, that there is a viable context for students, faculty, and staff to establish a distinctive community in which humane virtues are valued and the worth of each individual is affirmed, based upon the conviction that everyone is created in the image of God.

As part of a residential college experience, students are encouraged to develop themselves as whole persons: athletes, artists, hall mates, scholars, and civic leaders. In keeping with the Reformed Tradition's value of using and cultivating God-given talents for the greater good, Davidson's athletic and arts programs foster a sense of community and invite broader public participation in the life of the College.

As is also consistent with the Reformed view of human life, the College continues to strive toward providing access to people from a variety of nationalities, sexual and gender identities, racial and ethnic groups, and religious traditions. Such programs as The Davidson Trust are reminders that education at Davidson is not simply the prerogative of those who are economically or socially privileged.

Davidson students are given strong encouragement to value personal integrity and to be responsible participants in a campus family in which each person's gifts can make a difference. The Honor Code,

which has been a distinctive aspect of campus life over the generations, is a focal component in the College's expectations of each student. Its emphasis on redemption and reconciliation rather than punishment reflects central tenets of the Reformed Tradition's vision of a community shaped by grace. The functioning of the Honor System thereby embodies the hopes we have for the ethical sensitivity which should be part of the education students receive here. Those who attend Davidson are expected to have a "disproportionate impact" for good both during their time here, and in the several worlds into which they go in their post-graduate lives.

As student, staff, and faculty populations continue to diversify, the College faces the challenge of meeting different needs than previously seen. The socioeconomic gap between students has increased campus attention toward hidden costs of tuition and barriers to the full Davidson experience. The College is working to address hunger needs and other gaps on campus still to be identified, through projects such as Davidson Shares. How can the financial and programmatic structure of Davidson align to meet the diversity of socioeconomic needs of the student body?

Further, the current generation of students demonstrates higher levels of need for mental health support, and they express desire for advisors and counselors from more diverse backgrounds. The Student Counseling Center, which requires additional resources to meet student demand, the Student Life staff, and Holistic Advising programs support students' overall wellbeing. Academic workloads, unhealthy personal habits, and an overly programmed culture contribute to significant stress. How can the College's commitment to educating the whole person promote an environment of mental health and wellness for students as well as faculty and staff?

3. Civic Engagement and Social Justice

Commitments to serving God, loving neighbor, and doing justice are among the deepest held convictions in the Reformed Tradition. They are grounded in biblical texts and find expression in a theological tradition that directly addresses issues such as equity and civil government, fair labor practices, and concerns about racism, economic injustice, gender equality, marriage equality, and the environment.

This dimension of the Reformed Tradition is embodied at Davidson in many ways (e.g., certain professorships, the Chaplain's Office, the Vann Center for Ethics). Davidson's commitment to service has remarkable depth and breadth across campus disciplines. Rather than being stand-alone activities, civic problem-solving and debate are integrated into academics, career development, and campus organizations. Faculty, staff, alumni, and friends are engaged in providing opportunities for students to develop analytical and communication skills that will equip them for civic leadership.

Perhaps the most prominent expressions are in the Center for Civic Engagement and in an environment that encourages a vibrant schedule of speakers and student-initiated activities that address cultural and moral questions arising from concerns for social justice and inclusive community. Civic engagement is thus a core tenet that shapes the ethos of Davidson as a college that prepares students to serve and lead in an increasingly global and pluralistic world.

The diversifying student body shapes the campus-wide emphasis on civic engagement. In addition to The Davidson Trust, the College shares partnerships with scholarship programs for first-generation students, undocumented students, and students of high financial need that demonstrate exceptional potential. By making good on its pledge to educate students who share its values and show promise for benefit to society, irrespective of economic circumstances, Davidson fosters experiences for all students that result in a deeper understanding of issues and better skills for implementing solutions. Recent student initiatives addressing refugee support, racial equity, the rights of the LGBTQ+ community, and interfaith understanding demonstrate a desire to engage the campus community in response to growing societal tensions. The administration supports student initiatives in this regard.

Fostering cooperation across lines of difference is also increasingly critical and challenging as the College prepares students for lives of leadership and service. Davidson encourages students, staff, and faculty to work with peers who share different convictions than their own on issues of common concern. As ideological divides sharpen in the broader world, how do we equip Davidson students with the resilience and moral courage to learn in dialogue with people who hold different opinions and positions?

Even as the College welcomes the perspectives and thoughtful critiques from our diversifying community, it can also avail itself of Reformed principles to provide an education for personal and collective liberation. To use recent examples, how can students, staff, and faculty draw upon the resources of Davidson's Reformed heritage to respond particularly in moments of crisis and social concern such as incidents of racial violence, deportations of undocumented persons, and civil unrest? As an institution of historic privilege, how can Davidson exercise its responsibility to address world needs today with humility and solidarity?

4. Religious Life and Interfaith Engagement

Religious life at Davidson is celebrated in an environment where exploration and expression of one's faith and spiritual life are welcomed but not required. It is a community that values the opportunity for everyone to talk openly about religious beliefs and practices, regardless of one's own views. And it is committed to attracting students from diverse faiths and cultural heritages, so that they can learn from each other, challenge their own beliefs, and be equipped with religious literacy, practical interfaith skills, and humane values as they lead and serve in a pluralistic world.

This approach to spiritual life, which affirms both religious particularity and pluralism, grows out of the Reformed Tradition's assertion that every person is created equally in the image of God and therefore has dignity and worth. In its own theological language, this tradition says that Jesus Christ reveals God's redemptive purposes in the world. It also insists that people of no one religious tradition, including Christians, have a corner on understanding God or being loved by God. By honoring the variety of religious traditions and non-religious perspectives present at the College, Davidson seeks to ensure that people of all backgrounds are afforded the respect and resources that enable them to flourish here as together we work for the common good.

As a hub for religious life in all its variety, the Chaplain's Office serves the whole College community. The current college chaplain is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA). One full-time associate chaplain is an ordained Buddhist minister. The other two associate chaplains, both of whom serve part-time in that capacity, are Catholic and Jewish. The chaplains offer pastoral care to students of all backgrounds, actively support each student-led religious organization, and promote engagement between students of differing faith traditions. The chaplains also assist students considering a call to ministry or other religious leadership, supervise faith-based internships, and administer grants for spiritual exploration, study, and service. Moreover, they coordinate social justice and community development events, organize trips abroad for students to integrate faith and experiential learning, teach meditation and mindfulness to promote student well-being, and plan and lead worship services.

For the first 125 years of Davidson's existence, Presbyterian worship was woven into the fabric of the lives of students, faculty, and administrators through required attendance at weekly services. This worship was held in the sanctuary of the Davidson College Presbyterian Church, the very name of which indicates how deeply the congregants were involved with the life of the College. Although today DCPC serves students through its campus ministry initiatives and welcomes the use of church facilities for a variety of College programs, the congregation is no longer composed primarily of members associated with the College. Furthermore, the College community is no longer predominantly Presbyterian; in fact, less than 10% of students identify as Presbyterian. The Statement of Purpose appropriately affirms support for worship in diverse traditions (see Appendix for religious profile of current students).

Currently, the College has seven regular, on-campus opportunities for worship (not including Sunday services at DCPC). Many of these are led or co-led by students. They include: Catholic Mass, Episcopal Morning Prayer (daily) and Eucharist (weekly), Muslim Jumah prayer, Jewish Shabbat services, a mid-week ecumenical Christian service, and a Thursday evening Christian contemporary praise and worship service. Davidson also celebrates holy days and religious festivals from Asian, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, and Muslim traditions.

The array of seventeen student-led religious groups is another indicator of the interest in and commitment to religious faith and spiritual practice on campus today. These include Buddhist, Jewish, and Muslim groups, seven denominational and five non-denominational Christian fellowships, an interfaith club, and a non-sectarian meditation gathering, which addresses the growing need for spiritual opportunities for students who identify as secular, agnostic, or non-religious.

This diversity of traditions raises practical challenges. For example, how can the College provide for students' wide range of religious needs? Four years ago renovated space in the Union created the inclusive prayer/meditation/worship space known as the Oasis in the Chaplain's Office suite. Within the past year the College has added a meditation room in the Spencer-Weinstein Center for Community and Justice. Ablution facilities are available for Muslim students in both locations. However, some students express a desire for other vital facilities, such as a kosher/halal kitchen. They rightly observe that without appropriate accommodations for ritual observance, certain groups of prospective students will never consider applying to Davidson. How can the College provide for students' wide range of religious needs, particularly for underrepresented minority communities?

Another challenge grows out of our broader cultural climate. Because the loudest Christian voices in our society are often exclusionary and even hostile toward other religious traditions and non-religious worldviews, Davidson's faith heritage is easily misunderstood, especially when coupled with Davidson's geographic location. Some prospective students and their families cross Davidson off of their list because they assume the College will be close-minded and religiously discriminatory. In light of the broader climate, how can the College publicly affirm that its inclusive, humane, social-justice oriented vision is rooted in its Presbyterian heritage and identity?

Changing student demographics mean that Davidson has a greater percentage of non-religious, atheist, agnostic, or spiritually unaffiliated students, faculty, and staff. In a 21st-century global context, a pressing need exists for students of all and no traditions to become versed with basic literacy on the world's faiths. Likewise, faculty and staff need to develop the skills to engage with students for whom religion is central to their identity, and to facilitate classrooms and activities with religiously diverse students. How should the College address the needs of those with little familiarity with religion so that they develop the religious literacy and interfaith skills essential to a liberal arts education in our pluralistic world?

In sum, how can Davidson draw on its Reformed heritage to be an exemplar within higher education of an institution where being grounded in a particular religious tradition promotes openness to and respect for a plurality of faith traditions and worldviews? How can the College's Reformed heritage actually widen diversity by promoting respect for religious practices and perspectives, as well as interfaith engagement, which in other higher education contexts are sometimes marginalized by secular or religious institutional ideologies? Also, can the College extend its reach by collaborating with DCPC and other local congregations to promote interfaith learning in the wider community as a sign of our respect for all worldviews and religious traditions? How can different members of the Davidson community (students, faculty, staff, alumni and trustees) engage with each other in better understanding the College's faith heritage and its expressions on campus today?

The College's Reformed Heritage: The Future

As an academic institution grounded in a minority strand of Christianity, Davidson College contributes to the diversity of higher education in America today. The Reformed Tradition calls the College to be a community of rigorous study while encouraging persons to explore and practice their varied faith traditions and while valuing inclusivity and diversity. With a firm sense for its particular heritage but also a genuine sense of humility, Davidson College seeks to continue contributing a vibrant institutional vision and purpose fitting for the development of servant leaders in our contemporary world.

Appendix

Religious/Worldview preferences of Davidson College Students 2016-2017

Tradition/Worldview	Total number	% of student body
Roman Catholic	328	16.6
Agnostic	190	9.6
Presbyterian	172	8.7
Anglican/Episcopalian	126	6.4
Methodist	101	5.1
Jewish	97	4.9
Baptist	84	4.3
Atheist	83	4.2
Spiritual	39	1.9
Lutheran	37	1.9
Muslim	24	1.2
Buddhist	18	0.9
Orthodox Christian	16	0.8
Hindu	12	0.6
Unitarian Universalist	10	0.5
Friend/Quaker	10	0.5
Other Christian*	345	17.5
Other Traditions**	13	0.7
None	103	5.2
Not reported	165	8.4

*Other Christian includes: Adventist, Apostolic, Christian Missionary, Christian Reformed, Christian Scientist, Church of Christ, Church of God, Evangelical Covenant, Foursquare Gospel, International Church of Christ, Moravian, Mormon (LDS), Non-denominational Protestant, Pentecostal, United Church of Christ.

**Other Traditions include: Deist, Humanist, Jain, Sikh, and other religions (not specified).

These figures are based on a total enrolled student population of 1973, including students not currently in residence on the Davidson campus. Some of the percentages have been rounded for convenience in presentation. All information is self-reported by students either to the Office of the Chaplain or on a form submitted to the Dean of Students Office at the beginning of their first year at Davidson College.