

STATE OF THE FAITH–WORK MOVEMENT IN AUSTRALIAN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, PREPARED FOR THE 9:30AM-4:00PM NOVEMBER 1, 2018 GATHERING



Please give your name, institution, role, and a brief (80-100 word) bio outlining your personal involvement and interest in this area of Faith and Work Integration (FWI) in theological education.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY—POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

- ❖ Many of us are either bi-vocational or come from another professional background (economics, education, media, medicine, etc.), such that *integration* is a driving theme in our academic work and personal practice of following Christ. Leveraging this knowledge and these networks may be key to a well-rounded movement.
- ❖ What, then, is “integration”? Does this word sufficiently capture our aims in “Faith–Work Integration”? How might positioning Faith and Work as requiring integration, thus being separate domains, be problematic? Might other language better serve our purposes at this moment in time?
- ❖ It falls short of a tension, but even in our profiles, different emphases are evident, such as *worldview* (thinking/framing well the place of ‘work’ relative to mission), *ethics* (appropriate action in a changing world, utilising some form of practical theological reflection for more truthful action), and *practices* (whole life discipleship and formation through and for work for holistic witness). How do we hold these emphases and priorities together in a coherent frame (for instance, David Miller’s “Everywhere Integrator”), so that this burgeoning movement in Australia is set on the right footing, avoiding unhelpful binarisms and piecemeal initiatives?
- ❖ Many of us are involved both in lecturing, and academic centres or parachurch leadership. Our time and roles are split. Strategic partnership and Memorandums of Understanding between our various employers, and the domains of church, academy and society are key to not burn out and ensure sufficient funding and time for our efforts. Additionally, a number stated the desire to see church reform, away from a pastor-/ecclesio-centric model. This also requires careful navigation and clear communication to partner, rather than working at cross-purposes, a larger vision filtering through our various networks and communities.

I. EXPERIENCE (What is going on?)

Description of the concrete tension in a local context



1. Describe what is happening in the FWI space in your college

Guiding Questions:

- What forms does FWI take in your institutional context, and how wide is its reach?
- What initiatives have been most impactful/effective? What have been least impactful/effective?
- How embedded is this goal of whole life discipleship and faith and work integration, among the student body and faculty? And how important is this endeavour, amidst the many purposes of theological education?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY—POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

- ❖ FWI is highly variable across ACT, from a key organising theme, to an unrealised aspiration. For each survey participant, unsurprisingly, it is a high priority. However, the will of various colleges and leadership teams to pursue this priority is questionable. Many noted that FWI holds an important place conceptually but is not deeply embedded in college life or offerings. How have you secured funding and raised FWI profile, to better align aspiration and reality? This is especially key given the growing percentage of students heading back to the workplace and not pursuing a pastoral track. How can we better serve and equip these students?

- ❖ FWI occurs at the level of (i) institutional priority, including Centres, Chapel, Consultancy and Conferences, alongside various extension activities including research programmes to impact the Church and workplaces (e.g. work placements and internships); (ii) curriculum organisation across schools and offering of key subjects, requiring a “robust theological framework for integrating theology and faith with best practice in those vocational contexts”; (iii) specific classroom practices/pedagogy/discipleship and assessment, to give FWI content and themes sufficient emphasis. Which level is key, or needs most work, in your context? What initiatives of your colleagues in this survey hold especial promise in your context?
- ❖ In terms of subjects offered, there are some that address FWI specifically as a core theme, others that touch on this in isolated lectures, and yet other subjects that delve deeper into various themes (e.g. mission, chaplaincy, counselling, disability and suffering) that support Whole Life Discipleship (WLD). Are there ways to increase the profile and uptake of these subjects, as they are typically electives amidst packed programmes of study and a largely siloed curriculum structure that works against integration? WLD language and framing seems pivotal in confronting the sacred–secular dichotomy which prioritises church work over other forms of vocational work. What language might we adopt across our institutions to alter mindsets?
- ❖ At least on a first read, Laidlaw College appears to be the only college with a complete “Vocational Theology” track. We might all ask, however, what subjects are most relevant in our context? How might we get an accurate sense/inventory of the degree to which these themes are already integrated? How might we embed these core themes and an integrative model within more subjects? What interest is there among our students, or opportunities for alternative schools/tracks to support FWI? Can we partner together in forming and offering a wider range of subjects across the ACT cohort—moving beyond generic FWI to specific theological reflection on professions such as Law, Education, Media and the like—given that many colleges are consolidating and reducing rather than adding to their subject offerings in a time of flux in the sector? Forming a solid network of leading thinkers and practitioners is crucial at this juncture.
- ❖ How can we establish a solid HDR base for post-graduate students to continue pressing the limits of integration in theological education, with focused projects? Is there potential for partnership on this front?

II. EXPLORATION (Why is this going on?)

Analysis of the situation through insights from secular and religious critical perspectives



2. For better or worse, why is your college’s FWI integration in this state?

Guiding Questions:

- What factors have been key in the success of FWI in your institutional context? Why?
- What factors have most hindered efforts at FWI, both in terms of teaching and college structure? Why?
- What broader secular insights are most pertinent to how we approach FWI in the current Australian context? (*For instance, insights from the fluid labour market, economics, psychology of work and meaning making, leadership literature and deep work principles, best practice in sustainability, etc.*)
- What is your sense of how FWI at your college connects to the priorities of local churches? How are the needs/priorities of church & wider culture impacting your efforts toward whole life discipleship?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY—POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

- ❖ It is crucial for FWI to be essentially connected to and expressive of each college’s vision and mission, and denominational distinctives (e.g. “priesthood of all believers”). Using language and a rationale familiar to one’s context helps bridge the sacred–secular dichotomy, connecting the dots of faith and work such that it serves, rather than is seen as a distraction from, core business of theological education.
- ❖ It also requires advocacy/representation from the top-down, owned as a key priority by boards, Principals and academic heads alike. Strategic consideration of the place of FWI across every aspect of college life is needed, filtering even into assessment practices and classroom pedagogy. We need faculty champions to tell stories and model best practice, highlighting the possibilities and impact of integrated approaches, even showcasing student work. The message of WLD/FWI hasn’t effectively filtered through the College/Church.

- ❖ Strategic employment of academics with bivocational experience may help, drawing on their learning in the secular context, and encouraging them to pursue research agendas aligned with the integration of professional background and theology for the wider mission of the church. Fostering thought leaders with public profile and academic respectability is a long term need and concern. Additionally, partnership with workplace sector and parachurch groups may foster a stronger FWI approach across colleges.
- ❖ Denominational location of colleges can both help and hinder in this process, often privileging a clerical/ecclesial-centric focus that places FWI as a peripheral concern. The hidden curriculum and practices in Chapel, such as stories told and speakers accessed, may partially address this divide.
- ❖ The church as a whole is increasingly aware of the need for whole-life discipleship, which may be the most effective way in to broader FWI approaches, especially for retirees and students not seeing their current student status as a form of ‘work’. Language of ‘ministry’ needs reframing to be more inclusive.
- ❖ Awareness of the church’s changing position in post-Christendom western society helps us pierce the church bubble to see the need for a holistic approach. Integrating the social sciences and philosophical insight on culture change with theological reflection is much needed and long overdue. Wider concerns of changing cultural context need attention, including the “anxiety epidemic”, growing links with Asia/Asian workforce, the loss of privilege and funding for church-programmes/secularisation/privatisation of faith/rejection of proselytising, and greater automation making employment fluid and unstable. Relatively little theological attention in subjects has been given to these changes, calling for ongoing research and dialogue.
- ❖ Many students find FWI subjects and themes refreshing, but the overall profile and uptake of such subjects is relatively low. Why is this? How does ACT structuring of degrees help or hinder uptake? The siloed nature of ACT departments and offerings limits the uptake of integratory subjects. How might we move subjects like “Theology for Everyday Life” beyond elective into core curriculum? What promotion serves this end? And how might our Centres secure greater funding to sustainably drive these agendas, championing stories of FWI for the life of the world and more holistic and effective mission?
- ❖ On a pragmatic level, the continued rise of online/distance education impacts delivery mode and the potential for whole-life discipleship. This may also present an opportunity, with variable modes of delivery and occasional courses/audits with flexibility for workers. Rising bureaucracy and general busy-ness tests our priorities, with FWI often relegated to a secondary matter. Time is limited for faculty to develop new units, suggesting the value of sharing resources across the consortium, both curricular and in terms of guest speakers and online materials.

III. REFLECTION (What should be going on?

And where is the common ground?)

Seeking to correlate these insights toward guides for action



3. Seeking wisdom to guide our way forward, what should be happening in FWI for your college and the ACT?

Guiding Questions:

- Theologically conceived, what do you believe should be the place of whole life discipleship and FWI in your college’s education today? And what of the ACT consortium as a whole?
- Projecting five years into an ideal future, describe the form FWI might take in theological education?
- More immediately, what are your hopes for FWI in your context?
- Considering secular and religious insights above, what *principles* should guide FWI moving forward?
(We will collectively discern some of these principles when we gather together.)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY—POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

- ❖ A guiding question to consider the priority of FWI and WLD: “how big is the gospel?” Do students see Jesus as literally Lord over *all* of life? And what does theological education for transformation, not simply information, look like? Transformative pedagogy is key, across every aspect of teaching and learning through the ACT consortium. What would it take for *every* student to graduate with a clear sense of call that embraces all of life, and a theological method as second nature to critically reflect and integrate their faith and everyday life, particularly on their vocational frontline? How do we promote this conversation, and language, so it becomes a new ‘normal’?
- ❖ What would it look like for the extra-curricular elements of your college (prayer, Chapel, PD for staff, promotions) to embody FWI, reinforcing its centrality through your everyday practices and procedures?
- ❖ A first step is making subjects like “Theology for Everyday Life” core/central to degrees, rather than a low priority elective. “FWI ought to be a major stream at ... the ACT, equally valued with traditional pastoral ministry training.” This requires raising its status, alongside considering the number of electives and place of interdisciplinary/integration units. From there, additional units may be developed, ultimately forging a vocational path, even tailored to particular professions/tracks.
- ❖ What links does your college have to offer consultancy and PD for Christian workers and professions? How do dynamic stakeholders beyond the church speak into and shape what you do and value as a college?
- ❖ What voice do you have into local churches so that pastors and parishioners might value WLD and FWI for fruitfulness on their frontlines? Telling stories and raising the profile through every channel is key. Who are your champions, doing this well, such that when shared/profiled the broader church culture and narrative of living for *shalom* and salvation might be established and normalised?
- ❖ What historical examples (such as Bonhoeffer with Finkenwalde) or other cultural examples (such as accessed through Graham Hill’s “[Global Church Project](#)” and the Lausanne Movement special interest groups on “[Business as Mission](#)” and “[Workplace Ministry](#)”, especially with their 2019 Philippines [Global Workplace Forum](#)) might inform/enrich our vision of FWI and WLD moving forward?
- ❖ What flexibility do we have in credit and non-credit courses, e.g. micro-credit courses, workshops, audit, RPL, intensives and online, to increase the potential base of people participating in these courses?
- ❖ Does your College have a workplace centre to keep a sharp edge on this priority? Are you able in theory and positioned in practice to direct some student fees, denominational funds, or private grants, into delivery of specialist training and developing new units? What advocacy is necessary for this to be valued?
- ❖ What units/subjects are presently on offer, and what might you be prepared to share with other ACT Colleges for maximum impact? What MA units could you pursue/provide, and how might we partner together to increase student numbers and regularity of offering these units? How would sharing be facilitated? And what are our meeting points, e.g., via ReVenture?
- ❖ Can ACT offer some workshops and PD across the consortium on integration, degree structures and best practice in this space? Could the ACT set up an overarching “Centre of Excellence for Research, Teaching and Learning in FWI” that drives integration forward? The conference and networking/hub seem important for cross-pollination, as does the partnering with and support of movements such as ReVenture.

IV. ACTION (How will we respond?)

New practices directed by reflective-practitioners, for truthful action and faithful practice



4. What next steps will we take in moving toward this ideal vision for FWI in our college and the ACT as a whole?

Guiding Questions:

- What are your immediate priorities toward more faithful and fruitful FWI and whole life discipleship? That is, in terms of SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound), what are the three most significant actions you should do in the next 3 months to continue this movement?
- Who are your key stakeholders and supporters in this process? What specific help do you need?
- What are your key needs to mobilise for action? What are the greatest barriers?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY—POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

- ❖ Prayer is our first priority, waiting on God’s guidance, as this is a major kingdom concern.
- ❖ A shared language and broad theological frame—capable of accommodating denominational distinctives—will help colleges work together, and colleagues to understand each other, in the space of FWI and WLD.
- ❖ Significant partnerships between colleges, and college to professional bodies/para-church ministries, are key. These take time to form, but should guide any actions taken, and expand the pool of students with training and consultancy opportunities. It may also forge meaningful partnerships to fund centres and course/workshop offerings. This also relates to our denominational leadership, finding common ground for theological education to serve the church more widely.
- ❖ We must fine-tune our units at the College level, and consider sharing these with other colleges, as models of excellence in transformative and integrative education. Board/Principal support and advocacy with colleagues and across one’s college as a whole (e.g., through Chapel, with students, as a focus item at annual staff retreat) is necessary for the language and narrative of FWI and WLD to become embedded/owned and more students to take up these key subjects like “Theology for Everyday Life”.
- ❖ Championing best practice and workplace and church examples/stories of WLD will normalise this venture.
- ❖ An inventory/audit (e.g. google questionnaire) of how FWI is covered in each subject and one’s college as a whole will help us form a picture of where the gaps and strengths are. PD and guest lectures may then be offered to colleagues to support their efforts, and driven by Principals down, to make this a central focus across units. Some financial outlay indicates the real priority, so table this for 2019 in strategic plans.
- ❖ Promote interdisciplinary teaching and research, drawing on professional backgrounds of academic staff.



5. More specifically, we greatly value your insight in considering an Australian web-hub for ACT FWI, and in structuring the July 4–6 conference (see guiding questions below).

More Detail for Q5; Guiding Questions:

- Thinking specifically of a web-hub to concentrate and share our FWI best-practice across the ACT Consortium, what value do you see in setting up an Australian equivalent to <https://oikonomianetwork.org/> (see <https://oikonomianetwork.org/about/> for an overview).
- Moving toward the July 4–6 conference, our goal is “to provide an opportunity for participants to engage at the highest level in theological and practical reflection on the nature of work, the changing cultural and economic landscape in which we now operate as workers, and how churches and their leaders can more effectively equip their members to think well and live faithfully as workers.” Do these 3 conference strands appeal, and cover the landscape of what is required at this time?
- What particular topics would you like to see explored, or questions addressed?
What research opportunities do you see for future cross-college research collaboration?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY—POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

- ❖ The July 4–6, 2019, conference at Morling may become a catalyst for advocacy and raising the profile of FWI, driving cross-institutional research opportunities. The 3-strand conference structure works well, though perhaps additionally consider deep reflection upon the structure of theological education in Australia such that it is more conducive to FWI across all theological disciplines (a post Schleiermachiian non-siloed paradigm). Be sure to represent a range of theologies and framing of FWI, to include Reformed/conservative views with a gospel core. A great variety of topics helps (including vocational guidance for young people), though we don’t want to spread attendees too thin. Conference structure should centralise dialogue.
- ❖ Likewise, the web-hub can facilitate the sharing of best practice/ideas and course materials. However, several web-hubs and networks already exist; how will this be distinct, and is it needed? Avoid duplication. Maybe partner with Oikonomia, for an Oceania sub-page? Depth of theological reflection and sharing of course related materials is central; if not supported across the board, it may be a waste of energy. To proceed, we need some data on time/energy to run the site, cost to set it up and maintain, and intended usage. Other ways of sharing may be sufficient. Regardless, we must establish a formal network, in partnership with groups like ReVenture. ACT support and funding would establish this as a serious priority at the leading edge of theological education.

- ❖ N.b., the timing of the conference would clash with the ANZATS conference which in 2019 is running from 1-3 July in Auckland, NZ. Also, the International SBL meeting in Rome runs 1-5 July in 2019, so that will rule out biblical scholars who plan to attend that from both conferences. With Mark Greene's dates fixed, this may be unavoidable, but will significantly impact attendance, budget, and the strategic intent of the gathering.
- ❖ Most respondents stressed the importance of an Australian/New Zealand specific focus (e.g. issues of growing Asian links/workforce, anxiety epidemic, changing workplace landscape), vs. importing the same structures, topics and issues as addressed in Europe and America.



Other Comments

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY—POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

- ❖ In personal emails, a number of respondents explained the relative brevity of their answers by indicating that while they considered FWI a vital area of theological education, there was not much happening in this space at present. They were keen to learn from others how to do this better.
- ❖ Why, then, this disconnect, between perceived value, and minimal action? To what degree is this a local college issue, or a wider ACT challenge? What actions are most strategic in response?

Thoughts on Faith & Work Conference, 2019

Basics

The key idea is that this is a *scholarly* conference dealing with matters relating to faith-work integration (FWI). It aims to develop a robust, theologically informed community of research and practice in FWI by:

- Hearing from recognised experts in the field (Mark Greene in the first instance, but other internationally recognised foreign or domestic leaders in the field);
- Stimulating research in FWI;
- Gathering and disseminating work in the area;
- Legitimising FWI as an important area of theological (and other) scholarship;
- Publishing selected papers in a conference proceedings volume (or the like).

Tied to Mark Greene's visit. Three days: Thursday 4th to Saturday 6th July; Morling College
Be suitable for use with the ACT Conference Participation unit IN702

Contents

Three strands: theology of work; pastoral and church-focused; workplace oriented.

I've outlined the strands and *examples of possible topics* below. Note: these are examples; there are more in strand 1, but only because that's the area I know best.

Theology of work—examples of possible topics

Biblical texts, theological motifs and ethics

- Babel and a theology of technology
- Ecclesiastes and the ambiguity of work
- James, power and employment
- Sin, structures and work culture
- Eschatology and the worth of work
- Power, authority and service at work
- Compromise and complicity in the workplace

Discipline-specific theology

- A theology of medicine/nursing/law/teaching/ professions in general
- Conscientious objection in health care
- 'Let your yes be yes'—truth in advertising and the ethics of marketing
- 'Prosper the work of our *hands*'—a non-professional theology of work
- Plumbing and human (civic) flourishing

Practical theology and ministry practice —examples of possible topics

- Models of integrated ministry
- Practices of effective 'workship'
- Empirical data on churches, pastors and their (positive/negative) impact on workers
- 'best practice' in pastoral ministry and workplace discipleship.
- Musical, liturgical, and other resources for bringing work to church

Industry and marketplace issues—examples of possible topics

- Models of faith-work integration
- Practices of effective 'workship'
- Practical resources for effective 'workship'
- The changing face of work in Australia
- Globalisation and workplace change
- The precariat
- Stress, resilience and the gospel

Format

Key note address/es (aimed at academic and professional audience)

Public lecture (aimed at informed general audience)

Break out groups focusing on above areas—include invited papers by Greene and others as well as submitted papers from scholars and students.

Call for papers

We need to figure out the timing for the opening call and closing dates

Needs to allow for student participation—perhaps an earlier date for scholars and practitioners and a later one for student presentations?

Make sure that there is some balance in the presentations—and the keynotes—to cover all areas.

Things to do

- Need to identify roles and what else needs to be done
- Note call for papers will go out to ACT colleges, faculty and (postgrad) students (there will be a stream for HDR candidates).
- On November 1st, make sure I allow about 2/3 of the time for discussion—including how to make sure that the 3 strands interact with each other... (one idea being that there might be 3 Australian headline speakers to present an open general session on a topic in their strand).
- Discuss options for publication—perhaps ACT monograph series?