

**Covenant of Agreement between
the General Assembly Council of the Presbyterian Church (USA)
and the Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities**

As adopted by the Board of Directors of the Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities, September 8, 2005, and by the National Ministries Division of the General Assembly Council, September 22, 2005

I. Preface: This covenant expresses the vital partnership in mission between the Presbyterian Church (USA) and its related colleges and universities, a long-standing partnership based on shared beliefs, complementary visions and commitments, common history and a relationship of mutual respect and cooperation. Specifically the covenant is between the General Assembly Council (GAC), the national mission agency of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities (APCU), a voluntary organization whose members include most of colleges and universities related to the Presbyterian Church (USA).

II. Covenant Relationship: The term “covenant” is rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition and lies at the heart of the biblical story, where it usually refers to God’s promise to humanity. Unlike a contract, which sets forth the terms of an economic transaction, a covenant focuses on the relationship between two parties and commits each party to certain responsibilities that maintain or strengthen that relationship. Covenants are renewed periodically as a means of reaffirming the relationship and making mutual adjustments to enhance the covenant’s vitality.

III. History: Education has been a primary contribution of the Reformed faith to the broader Christian community, a distinctive characteristic since the time of John Calvin. In the United States, higher education is the oldest form of Presbyterian mission beyond the local congregation. Presbyterians founded more than one-fourth of the church-related colleges that existed at the start of the Civil War. Today there is growing awareness by both the church and its related colleges that this heritage must be nurtured and strengthened to avoid being lost. During the 1960s and 1970s, the two predecessor denominations of the PC(USA) severed most of their formal structural ties to the colleges and simultaneously reduced their financial support. During this period of growing independence, the colleges were challenged to continue without direct church control or support, and often sought ways to broaden their bases of support. This led many to reduce or eliminate their requirements for Presbyterian representation among trustees, administrators, and faculty. Some, though not all, reduced or abandoned mandatory attendance at worship and required biblical instruction. Factors contributing to these changes included financial demands on the church and the colleges, government requirements, concerns about academic quality and academic freedom, and changes in the broader society. Today, both the church and the colleges respect the colleges’ independence, yet seek to maintain an ongoing relationship in which the church affirms the value of higher education—specifically Presbyterian-related higher education—and the colleges affirm the value of their Christian and Reformed identity.

IV. Theological Basis: The Reformed faith has long regarded education as a core value firmly rooted in the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. When asked which was the

greatest commandment, Jesus answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your *mind*.” [Matthew 22:37] The Apostle Paul told his followers, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God.” [Rom. 12:2] John Calvin, in his *Commentary on I Corinthians*, said, “How richly deserving of honour are the liberal arts and sciences, which polish (men and women) so as to give (them) the dignity of true humanity.” Consistent with the notion of academic freedom, the church “Reformed and always reforming” encourages the academic exploration that lies at the heart of a liberal education.

V. Principles: Presbyterian-related colleges support the mission goals of the General Assembly Council—Spirituality and Discipleship, Justice and Compassion, Evangelism and Witness, Leadership and Vocation—by challenging students to know what they believe and value; by exposing them to issues of political, economic and social justice; by providing resources for nurturing faith at a critical time in their lives; and by preparing them for leadership in church and society. The church bears a special responsibility to the colleges and universities it helped to establish and those with which it has maintained a longstanding relationship. The church recognizes the valuable and unique role these colleges and universities play among the broad array of educational institutions.

VI. Covenant Responsibilities: In accordance with the principles described above, the GAC and APCU accept the following responsibilities and make the following commitments

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A. Covenant Responsibilities of APCU

The Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities will:

1. Affirm, support, and reflect the fundamental beliefs and values of the Presbyterian Church (USA), recognizing that its members, as independent entities, may at times disagree with specific policies of the General Assembly.
2. Communicate and advocate on behalf of its members and work to strengthen their relationship with the church.
3. Affirm and encourage its members to provide education that is grounded in the values of the Christian faith as expressed in the Reformed tradition, giving specific attention to the integration of faith and learning.
4. Affirm and encourage commitment by its members to providing a program of spiritual nurture, worship, and service.
5. Emphasize the particular responsibilities of presidents and trustees to monitor and sustain the connection between the church and its related colleges and universities.
6. Share information with its members about the PC(USA) and its work, especially as it relates to higher education.

7. Work with the church to identify ways in which the church and its colleges can work as partners to address the emerging issues of a global society.
8. Encourage its members to make resources (faculty expertise, campus facilities, etc.) available to support the work of the church.
9. Encourage students, faculty, and others to engage in mission programs of the PC(USA) locally, nationally and internationally.
10. Communicate ways in which the work of its members supports the church's mission priorities of Leadership and Vocation, Justice and Compassion, Spirituality and Discipleship, and Evangelism and Witness.
11. Promote its member institutions to Presbyterians, particularly to prospective students.
12. Be a central source of information about Presbyterian colleges and universities and a resource to the General Assembly, the General Assembly Council, and other parts of the church.

B. Covenant Responsibilities of the General Assembly Council

The General Assembly Council, through the National Ministries Division, will:

1. Affirm and support the mission of Presbyterian colleges and universities in American education, recognizing that these institutions reflect the church's intellectual roots and provide a significant resource for the church's future growth and development.
2. Partner with APCU in promoting Presbyterian colleges and universities among Presbyterians including, where possible and appropriate, by sharing the cost of promotion.
3. Look to Presbyterian colleges and universities as a resource and potential partner in exploring issues confronting the church and society.
4. Oversee the distribution of restricted accounts to APCU member institutions, including financial aid for studies and Bible Grants.
5. Provide non-financial support for related colleges and universities through interpretation, advocacy, consultation, assistance with trustee leadership and encouragement of prospective students to attend APCU member institutions.
6. Partner with related colleges and universities in joint programs that serve the mission priorities of the church.
7. Inform APCU and its member institutions of GAC resources, programs, and activities of particular interest to college students, faculty, and staffs and encourage their use.

8. Forward business of mutual concern to the General Assembly.
9. Designate the executive director of APCU as a resource person at General Assembly for the purpose of answering questions pertaining to Presbyterian colleges and universities.
10. Enable APCU to participate in Extra Commitment Opportunities of the church.
11. Appoint two church representatives to serve on the Board of Directors of APCU Risk Management.
12. Make office space available to APCU through the National Ministries Division space allocation and make available support systems, including communication services, information technology, human resources, insurance and risk management, and payroll and financial services, at costs comparable to those of GAC entities or as negotiated by APCU and the GAC.

VII. Accountability: In being faithful to this covenant, APCU and the GAC will be accountable to each other in the following ways:

1. APCU will invite a member of the National Ministries Division Committee to its annual meeting and one board of directors meeting with full voice.
2. A representative of APCU will be invited to report annually to the National Ministries Division Committee about the work of APCU and its member institutions, and, at least once every three years, to the full GAC.
3. The Executive Director of APCU will meet regularly with the GAC's higher education program staff and with other GAC staff to share information and identify projects of mutual interest.
4. Either party may request a review of this covenant at any time and may propose changes or additions to the covenant upon three months' written notice to the other party. A representative group from each body will review the covenant at six-year intervals. The terms of this covenant will commence upon its approval by both parties and continue for six years thereafter.