

**Faith & Learning:
Leavening Ideas for Colleges and Departments
Faculty Center, 5-17-17**

It would not be expected that all of the faculty should be categorically teaching religion constantly in their classes, but it is proper that every professor and teacher in this institution would keep his subject matter bathed in the light and color of the restored gospel, and have all his subject matter perfumed lightly with the spirit of the gospel. Always, there would be an essence and the student would feel the presence. (Spencer W. Kimball, Education for Eternity, Pre-school Address to BYU Faculty and Staff, September 12, 1967)

Alan Wilkins and Jane Birch collected the following information based on a series of focus groups we had with all of the department chairs on campus. We invited them to tell us what they have seen that works and what they have done that works to support faith and learning in their departments. We combined their ideas with other ideas we've collected and created a document of ideas. Below are the results. Of course, we do not expect any department or Faith and Learning Fellow to do more than a small number of the ideas here, if any, but it may spark some ideas for ways you can support your college that speak to you. You know your college environment the best, as well as what you are uniquely able to offer.

A Little Leavening

How do we support faculty, colleges, and departments in keeping the unique mission of BYU alive as a vital force in what is done at BYU? Everyone agrees this is important, but the many other demands that compete for our time and attention are also important. Elder Kimball's vision was not that everything we do should foreground the gospel, but that all that we do should be "bathed" in the "light and color" of the gospel. This is a challenge that our current LDS leaders and BYU board members are also encouraging us to do.

The Faculty Center suggests an approach we call "a little leavening." Just as a "little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Galatians 5:9), strategic, periodic focus on the unique mission of BYU is one way to help all of us remember to bathe *everything* we do in the light of the gospel. We believe whatever leaven we add to the mix should (1) feel natural (whether or not it is integrated into other activities that are happening at the same time); (2) make it clear that there is no one right (or mandated way) of doing this; (3) respect the agency and individuality of faculty members; (4) be done with the Spirit of God.

Almost any university activity can serve as an occasion to reflect on the mission of BYU and/or the Aims of a BYU Education, whether these topics are in the

foreground or the background. Adding this reflection to these activities ensures that faculty engage with these ideas on a regular basis and encourages them to keep all the work they do here at BYU “bathed in the light and color of the restored gospel.”

University Leavening

There are a number of ways the university and support units on campus are currently providing opportunities to faculty to reflect on the Mission of BYU and/or the Aims of a BYU Education. At the university level, these opportunities include:

- Annual University Conference
- New faculty hiring
- New faculty orientation
- Student ratings and comments

College/Department Leavening

What college/department activities help faculty reflect regularly and periodically on the Mission of BYU and the Aims of a BYU Education in a meaningful way throughout the year? No college/department does this the same way as others. We expect each college/department is developing their own ways of “leavening the lump” (and we hope each is willing to share what they are doing with others to provide insight and inspiration). As you develop your own ways in your college/department, we encourage you to:

- Work with the other faculty in your college/department. Faculty will have much more buy-in if they are part of the process of planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- Seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to guide and direct your efforts.

Here are some questions college/department faculty could consider together as they reflect on where they are now and where they might want to go:

- What is already happening in our college and/or department?
- What type of impact are these activities having?
- What might we do to strengthen what we are already doing?
- Where are there missed opportunities to add reflection on the Mission of BYU and the Aims of a BYU Education to what we are doing?
- What might make sense for our college/department to do to better ensure that the Mission of BYU/Aims of a BYU Education are regularly and periodically considered in a meaningful way?
- What will best help us to keep all that we do in this college/department “bathed in the light and color of the restored gospel”?

Example Ideas

Below is a compilation of things various colleges/departments at BYU have tried. Looking through this list may spark an idea or two for something that would benefit your college/department. (If you are interested in a particular idea and want to know what others have done, the Faculty Center is happy to share what we know and even help you connect with other departments.)

College/Department Meetings (note that most of these are also examples of things faculty can do in their classes as well)

1. Before each meeting, pray for and then be on the watch for opportunities to share thoughts, ideas, impressions that come to you from the Spirit.
2. Start with sincere prayer. (As you listen to the prayer, you might find ways to make a verbal connection to what was said and what will happen or does happen in the meeting.)
3. Ask questions and invite thinking/discussion on faith and learning. Questions are powerful because they don't impose an answer but invite inspiration, seeking, and counseling together. Example discussion topics: How do students know if we have a testimony? How do we live our lives so our testimonies naturally are shared with students? What does it mean when we know "we are the message" (who we are as people communicates more to students than what we tell them)? (see also "Sparking Faculty Conversations" below).
4. Feature a relevant and authentic spiritual thought or experience, along with a personal experience (ask a different faculty member each time).
5. Share best practices with each other. Regularly feature things faculty are doing to promote the Aims of a BYU Education (ask a different faculty member each time).
6. Share personal stories and experiences related to the mission. (Example prompt: Why did the Lord bring you to BYU? Why did the Lord keep you at BYU?)
7. Discuss with each other topics in the disciplines in the department that students often find challenging.
8. Read and discuss important documents together, such as selections from the BYU Mission, the Aims of a BYU Education, *Educating Zion* or various BYU "founding documents."
9. Find the "founding stories" of the college/department that are inspiring and connected to the BYU mission. Gather stories of fabled faculty who made a difference in the lives of students. Share these stories with each other.
10. The example of the dean/chair is important. When leaders share their faith with the faculty and makes it a safe topic to discuss, this encourages other faculty to do the same. Don't be cynical. Ask sincere questions. Invite the development of a unifying vision for the college/department that includes how to align your vision with the university.

Faculty Retreats

- Retreats can (1) be focused squarely on a faith and learning topic; or (2) this topic can be part of a larger retreat; or (3) as retreats are designed, find ways to thread this topic into the retreat in meaningful ways.
- Ideas listed above under college/department meetings can be done at greater depth in a retreat setting

One-on-one Conversations with Faculty

- Meet more often than during the Annual Stewardship Interview. Discuss the mission of BYU. Ask them what they have found useful. Share ideas with each other.

Create embodied reminders of the BYU Mission

- Find or create logos, songs, coins, or visual images that fit well with the college/department and can help remind people of the mission of BYU and how it intersects with the mission of the college/department and what the college/department is all about (the more people involved in the selection, the more ownership and buy-in there will be).
- Create ritualized activities that can be done as a community of faculty together or faculty with students (e.g. regular seminar sessions, pot-lucks, or annual gathering at a faculty member's home).

Capitalize on the natural advantages ("secret sauce") the disciplines in the college/department have for integrating faith and learning. (e.g. the natural sciences have God's creation to draw on; the arts have the natural relationship between beauty and truth).

- Share ways faculty take advantage of these natural advantages.
- Document these ideas so they can be shared with students and new hires (consider using video and posting them on-line).

Annual stewardship interviews

- Ask questions that allow faculty to reflect on how they are contributing to the unique mission of BYU. This also reminds faculty that this is an expectation here at BYU.
- When reading student comments, watch for signs of either exemplary work or possible concern and discuss these with the faculty.
- Invite faculty to write professional goals that include furthering the unique mission of BYU.

Rank & Status process

- Ask each candidate to describe what they have done to develop their ability to contribute to the unique mission, what they are now doing, and what they might do to continue to develop their abilities
- Ask candidates for evidence that what they are doing is effective.

Gather feedback from students to help inform the process of moving forward

1. Interviews
2. Focus groups
3. Surveys
4. Review student portfolios to see how they reflect faith and learning in the college/department curriculum (whether explicitly assigned or not).
5. Exit interviews with students

Curriculum

- Build faith and learning components into strategic areas of the curriculum (e.g. entry into the major courses and required courses).
- Make faith and learning an important part of a capstone course
- Share ways to make faith and learning a natural part of labs, mentoring, fieldwork, internships, field trips, research, etc.

Sparkling Faculty Conversations: Discussion Starters

1. Share “gems” (things that have worked for faculty in their efforts to be spiritually strengthening and intellectually enlarging).
2. Show a short video from Faculty Center Faith & Learning website (<http://faithandlearning.byu.edu>) and discuss (Faculty Center can provide example questions).
3. Share one of the Faculty Center Faith and Learning quotes (on the website) and discuss how faculty have applied it, how it could be applied, and what you could do to help each other in this area.
4. Invite Faculty Center to survey students and bring in a brief summary of findings of their discussion.
5. Invite a panel of students (new freshmen, graduating seniors, grad students, or mix) and ask them to address what they feel about BYU’s mission and Aims and ways that college/department helps them and ideas about areas for improvement.
6. Invite the college/department to develop a strategy or vision/mission, and benchmarks/indicators of progress and then consider periodically how you are doing at accomplishing, and how you could improve.

When deans and chairs are willing to share their faith openly, they make the college/department a safe space where faculty can share their faith and testimony with each other and with students. As an administrator, how do you share your faith in the gospel and loyalty to the Church with your faculty? What can you do to make the college/department a safe place for faculty to share their faith with each other and to help each other learn to more effectively strengthen students in their faith?