



24 October 2014

Dear Colleagues,

We have received a few inquiries from members of our faculty concerning the status of the curriculum proposal that we voted upon at our September college faculty meeting. The administrative council received word regarding the decisions and recommendations of the Executive Committee of the Board, the Presidents Roundtable (presidents of the respective BYU campuses), and the full Board of Trustees immediately after these meetings. The Board of Trustees officially approved the cornerstone curriculum proposal at their October 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. However, we were asked by the Commissioner not to announce it to our faculty until it could be appropriately announced to all the CES entities. We were instructed to move forward in the meantime with the appropriate university curriculum approval processes. As a result, a few people at the university and among our faculty with "need-to-know" assignments were informed of the Board's decision.

Now that we have received authorization from the Board to announce this, we have felt it important to bring you completely up to date on **what has transpired since our meeting in September:**

- The CES Task Committee (comprised of Religious Education administrators from BYU, BYU-I, BYU-H, and Seminaries and Institutes) discussed at length with Elder Paul Johnson, CES Commissioner, the pros and cons of the cornerstone proposal.
- A clear majority of the Religious Education faculty voted to support the cornerstone curriculum proposal with institutional options. The Administrative Council unanimously supported the proposal and recommended that it be sent to the Board of Trustees.
- Dean Top conveyed to BYU President Kevin Worthen, Academic Vice-President Brent Webb, and Elder Johnson the results of faculty discussions and votes regarding the cornerstone proposal. The vote totals, as well as all of the anonymous comments that came from those meetings, were also given to them. Detailed reports by the department chairs concerning department discussions were also conveyed.
- Elder Johnson first discussed the proposal with Elder Russell Nelson (chair of the Executive Committee) and Elder Dallin Oaks (member of the Executive Committee). They asked why the proposal contained "institutional options." In response to that question, Elder Johnson outlined the concerns and important issues that had been articulated by the Religious Education faculty at BYU-Provo. Other members of the Board were also fully briefed on these issues by Elder Johnson. Later, at the full Board meeting those issues were again addressed in the context of the need for "institutional latitude." Pres. Worthen and VP Webb were also in attendance. Elder Johnson reported that he "did not sugarcoat the concerns" that had been expressed or downplay the opposition by many of the REL ED faculty at BYU. The Board was made fully aware of those concerns and why the proposal contained those additional "institutional options."
- It was reported by the Commissioner's office that the Board "enthusiastically endorsed" the proposal of the four cornerstone courses. Many of the Board expressed their sentiment that this was an inspired proposal whose time had come and that it would greatly bless the students in the Church Educational System. There was strong support for the cornerstone courses.
- We learned that they also approved the institutional options, but with less enthusiasm. They do not want to see the various CES entities implementing dramatically different

- requirements and/or options to “get around” the cornerstone courses. Unity of requirements and courses and providing somewhat comparable religious educational experiences among the CES institutions is very important in the minds of the Board, and therefore, approved “institutional options” should be “limited and transitional.”
- To ensure a degree of unity across institutions and to avoid giving students the impression that there is a specific sequence in which the cornerstone courses must be taken or the misconception that one course and its requirements is “upper division” and another is not, the courses were all assigned 200-level numbers.
- We received instruction from Academic Vice-President Brent Webb to begin the process for University Curriculum Council approval of these new courses and requirements. The Religious Education Curriculum Committee has met and approved the course numbers, titles, descriptions and submitted the necessary paperwork to the university for review and approval.

Clearly, this decision of the Board will not please everyone. But we are confident that we will now put aside any differences of opinion and roll up our sleeves and go to work. One of the things that makes BYU a unique university in all the world is a Board of Trustees comprised of prophets, seers, revelators and inspired leaders of the Church. We need to trust that inspiration and honor their sacred responsibility.

Over the next many months the faculty will be heavily involved in the “building” of the cornerstone courses by determining the absolute *essentials* that must be included in each cornerstone course. As we develop these new courses, we as the faculty will have the opportunity and responsibility to establish “quality control” for them, but yet allow for individual approaches and emphases. Attached is a suggested flowchart and timeline that identifies the process that must be completed to have these new courses and requirements in place for Fall 2015.

There will yet be some ironing out issues such as, what institutional options will be offered to meet the graduation requirements, transferring credits from other CES institutions, and the “grandfathering” of current students with present Religious Education requirements.

We worked hard on curriculum issues in 2013-14, but the real work lies ahead of us. As we move forward with the tasks at hand let us remember the teachings of the Apostle Paul on the “Law of the Harvest” and Alma on the “Law of Restoration”—what we, individually and collectively, contribute to making the very best courses possible will be “restored” to us. It will bless Religious Education students and faculty, BYU, the Church Educational System, and the broader Church for generations to come. What an important and exciting endeavor!

Thank you for all you have done and will yet do in this process. We greatly appreciate and respect your unique and valuable contributions to the work of Religious Education. We love you and are grateful to be on the same team.

Sincerely,  
Religious Education Administrative Council

Brent L. Top, Dean

Dana M. Pike, Associate Dean

Robert C. Freeman, Associate Dean

Richard E. Bennett, Chair

Camille Fronk Olson, Chair

Scott C. Esplin, Associate Chair

Kerry M. Muhlestein, Associate Chair

Attachments:

Proposal Approved by the Board

Curriculum Development/Approval Process Flowchart

# CURRICULUM PROPOSAL

8 October 2014

**Background:** Students in the religion departments of the Church Educational System (CES) and Institutes of Religion learn the gospel of Jesus Christ and develop faith through a study of the standard works and other related courses.

Current graduation requirements provide exposure to some but not all of the essential gospel doctrine and significant events in Church history that we hope every graduate would understand, believe, and apply. A modification of current graduation requirements could better meet this need.

It is suggested that graduation requirements remain at 14 course credits, that the current set of scripture courses continue to be offered as elective classes, and that the new core requirements for all the entities of CES become the following (one-semester, two-credit) courses:

1. Jesus Christ and the Everlasting Gospel: A study of the Savior and His roles in Heavenly Father's plan as taught across all the standard works
2. Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon: A study of the teachings and doctrine of the Book of Mormon with emphasis on the Savior's ministry
3. Foundations of the Restoration: A study of the key revelations, doctrine, people, and events of the Restoration
4. The Eternal Family: A study of the central role of the family in the plan of salvation as taught in the scriptures and the words of modern prophets

Institutional Options: Each institution may allow a student to meet the core requirements by substituting:

- a) *Book of Mormon 1 & 2* for *Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon*
- b) *The Gospels* for *Jesus Christ and the Everlasting Gospel*
- c) *Teachings of the Living Prophets* for *The Eternal Family*

Curriculum will be drawn from scripture, words of prophets, and key source documents such as *The Family: A Proclamation to the World* and *The Living Christ*.

**Executive Committee Recommendation:** Recommend approval.

# Where do we go from here?

(General Schedule—Tentative)

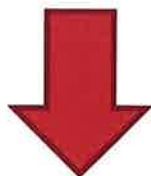
## Church Board Approval

Four Foundations are  
back in our Court



## College Curriculum Council Approval

Based on the Board Mandate, CCC identifies  
Course Names and works to secure course  
approvals from the University Curriculum Council



Department-Based  
Committees Organized  
by November 1st

Ancient  
Scripture

Church  
History and  
Doctrine

Christ and the  
Everlasting  
Covenant  
Religion 250

Teachings and  
Doctrine of The  
Book of Mormon  
Religion 275

Eternal Family &  
Modern Prophets  
Religion 200

Foundations of the  
Restoration  
Religion 225



Between November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014 and  
February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Department  
Committees and CCC

build basic outcomes/content  
essentials for each course



By February 28<sup>th</sup>, a final  
draft is submitted to  
Administrative Council



By April 15<sup>th</sup>, a Faculty  
Meeting will be convened  
to approve courses