REPORT ON THE MARKS OF CHURCH RELATEDNESS

Ohio Northern University was born out of Henry Solomon Lehr’s dream to make quality education accessible in rural areas and to improve teaching in village and town schools. Following his discharge from the Union Army in 1865, Lehr moved to Ada, Ohio, where he served as the town schoolmaster and taught a “select school” in the evenings for those interested in an education beyond the school’s regular offerings. Lehr and two fellow teachers collaborated with the townspeople to establish Northwest Ohio Normal School, which opened in Fall 1871. The catalog prepared for that first entering class articulated Lehr’s vision for the education to be offered by his university:

We aim, not only to impart the best instruction and to have our students independent thinkers, but also to assist them in acquiring the best modes of communicating what they know to others. … We strive to combine the practical with the theoretical.

The original focus on professional and liberal education for teachers was broadened to include programs in business (1872-1901; 1978), engineering (1882), pharmacy (1885), and law (1885), but Lehr’s vision for education never changed. In 1885, the school, renamed Ohio Normal University, was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation by its founders.

The development of publicly supported post-secondary education in rural Ohio communities at the end of the 19th century signaled the close of the era of the private normal school. In 1898, the Central Ohio Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church proposed purchasing Ohio Normal University from the founders. The sale was finalized in 1900, and, in 1903, the Board of Trustees changed the name of the institution to Ohio Northern University. For the past 115 years, the University’s relationship to the Church has remained vibrant.

The acquisition by the church made explicit the University’s commitment to the development of the “whole” self—including the spiritual aspects of the students’ lives as well as their intellectual and professional development. The “Wesleyan Quadrilateral”: scripture, tradition, reason, and experience, blending faith with reason and experience, meshed well with Lehr’s approach to higher education.

The ensuing century has seen many changes in higher education. Nevertheless, much has remained constant: the University’s mission, its professional programs infused with the liberal arts values of critical thinking and clarity of expression, its commitment to integrating the practical with the theoretical, and its affiliation with the United Methodist Church. Indeed, Lehr would recognize his goals for education in the University’s current Mission Statement:

Influenced by a unique history and an enduring affiliation with the United Methodist Church, Ohio Northern University’s mission is to provide a high quality learning environment that prepares students for success in their careers, service to their communities, the nation, and the world, and a lifetime of personal growth inspired by the higher values of truth, beauty, and goodness. The University’s distinctive academic program includes mutually supporting liberal
and professional education components that integrate practice with theory, complemented by excellent co-curricular offerings that enrich the Northern experience. To fulfill this mission, faculty and staff engage with students so they can learn to think critically, creatively, and entrepreneurially, communicate effectively, gain practical experience, solve problems collaboratively, and act as ethical and responsible members of a global community.

Our affiliation with the church is evident in the way we understand and carry out our mission today.

In preparing this report, we have chosen to organize it as responses to the marks of church relatedness criterion. In making this choice, we are cognizant of the 2013-16 Organization, Policies, and Guidelines of the University Senate of the United Methodist Church identifies four key evaluation criteria for United Methodist institutions:

1) Institutional Integrity
2) Program Quality
3) Sound Management and Financial Health
4) Church Relatedness of Schools, Colleges, and Universities

In preparation for Ohio Northern University’s recent Higher Learning Commission (HLC) reaffirmation, the University prepared a thorough self-study report that consists of five chapters that align directly with the HLC Accreditation Criteria.

Criterion One: Mission
Criterion Two: Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct
Criterion Three: Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support
Criterion Four: Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement
Criterion Five: Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

The first three University Senate criteria readily overlap with the HLC criteria. In order to minimize the production of redundant materials, please utilize the HLC self-study to address institutional integrity, program quality, and sound management and financial health. While some materials regarding church relatedness are mentioned in the self-study, the University has prepared a report on this topic specifically to assist the University Senate in its review.

1. A church-related institution identifies itself as such in printed materials, official listings, and other statements of self-description. Ohio Northern University (ONU) has identified itself as a United Methodist affiliated institution for more than a century. This identification continues today. For example, the “About ONU” pages on our website notes our affiliation in the Mission, Vision and Core Values; the History webpage discusses our Methodist roots; and our admissions materials and print advertisements frequently mention this relationship. The Student Life page breaks out a tab specifically for the campus “Religious Life”, which further provides information on how a student can engage in spiritual activities. The University’s Catalog contains many of these same materials in one reference.
A. University’s Mission, Vision and Core Values. As explained in our Mission Statement, the University’s affiliation with the Church and its influence on our principles are at the core of who we are. Beyond our Mission statement, the University emphasizes seven Core Values including:

   Faith: We celebrate the University’s historic relationship and active affiliation with the United Methodist Church and welcome persons of all faiths by providing a supportive environment for their moral and spiritual growth.

These statements are published on the University’s website and in our University Catalog (page 5), and included in the Faculty, Support Staff, and Administrative Handbooks.

B. History of the Institution. University publications also acknowledge our affiliation with the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1899 and its continued dedication to these principles as a church-related institution over the past century.

History of ONU website
University Catalog (page 6)

C. Admissions Materials. The University’s View Book for 2015 states the church relationship: “Affiliated with the United Methodist Church since the 1890s.” (This is found on page 7 of the printed version, or page 9 of the electronic pdf on the website.) This viewbook publication was mailed to over 27,000 high school students in August.

D. Print advertisements in newspapers. See Appendix A.

E. Religious Life webpage. The Office of the Chaplain provides numerous programming opportunities for students and faculty/staff alike, which are highlighted in the Student Life section of the University’s webpage under the heading Religious Life.

2. A church-related institution respects, honors, and provides the teaching of religion and, specifically, appropriate scholarly theological teaching in the Christian tradition within the curriculum. In the case of professional institutions and programs, the curriculum includes opportunity for faculty and student reflection on the ethical dimensions of professional practice.

The University’s Department of Philosophy and Religion offers numerous courses that are founded in the Christian tradition or that permit reflection on the ethical dimensions of professional practice. These courses support the students majoring in religion (BA), philosophy (BA), youth ministry (BA), and our newest major of Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (BA) as well as inform the intellectual life of students majoring in other disciplines.

University Catalog (pages 125 – 130)

The University offers several professional programs (e.g., engineering, pharmacy, accounting, nursing, management) at the undergraduate level. The University is committed to providing a
strong foundation in the liberal arts and developing a strong ethical and moral compass to students in these professional programs. In meeting this commitment, students studying in these professional fields are required to enroll in an ethics course. All five engineering majors in the College of Engineering, all students seeking early or middle childhood education licensure, and all pharmacy majors are required to take PHIL 2401 – Professional Ethics. Students in the College of Business Administration are required to take BIZ 1201 – Ethics for Business Planning.

All students in the College of Arts and Sciences are required to complete a distributional requirement. This requirement has several components, including a minimum of three humanities courses (courses taken from different disciplines in philosophy, religion, history, or literature). During 2014-15, 415 Arts & Sciences students (about one-third) enrolled in a philosophy or religion course. Students in the College of Pharmacy are also required to take a World Religious Perspective course. Pharmacy students can choose from any of the religion courses that are not focused on Christianity to help prepare them for interaction with clients who are not Christian. Students majoring in the Colleges of Engineering or Business Administration have at least four general education course electives to utilize in areas outside of their major.

The philosophy and religion faculty also typically teach about one-sixth of the sections of the general education program mandatory “Extradisciplinary Seminar”. Under the University’s general education guidelines, each student must take a seminar offered by a faculty member outside of their college or division (thus providing the “extra-discipline” aspect). The course is typically taken during the sophomore or junior year and currently focuses on the theme of globalization. This broad theme provides a wide variety of sections for this course, with each section heavily influenced by the professor’s expertise.

Seminar courses taught by the Department of Philosophy and Religion that are part of this requirement include:

**Christianity, Economics, and the Good Life:** What is "the good life" in the 21st century? An examination of Christian responses to issues of globalization and economics. Topics include discussion of theological treatments of consumerism, the excluded or marginalized of globalized society, and the relationship between global economic systems and faith. The class also discusses the definition of meaningful work and the economics of religious expression.

**Nature, Value, and Community:** Considers what a community is, why we value being a part of them, along with the conflict between individuals and communities. There is a special focus on globalization and inter-community conflicts.

**Architecture, Landscape, Place:** Humans are both embodied and emplaced beings. Though obvious, these facts have dramatic philosophical and ethical implications. This course explores the philosophical and ethical dialogue that emerges in human responses to the natural environment through traditional and landscape architecture. These responses influence our personal identities as both local and global citizens as well as shape the earth on which we live. Humans are both embodied and emplaced beings.
The Bible and Postcolonialism: The Bible itself is literature written when the Jewish and Christian authors were subjects of imperial power from the Babylonian Empire to the Roman Empire. Later the Christian Bible was used as an imperial tool for the colonization of Africa, Asia, Australasia, and the Americas by European countries and this history continues today influencing the globalization of Western culture. However, non-Western Christians have taken the interpretation of the Bible into their own hands to use it as a liberating tool against colonization and globalization. Thus, the study of the Bible can profit much from a better understanding of postcolonial theory.

During 2014-15, 100 students enrolled in the six seminars offered by philosophy and religion faculty out of the 648 students who took the seminars.

3. A church-related institution respects and honors religious practice and specifically, worship and service for students and faculty that choose to participate in the Christian tradition within the total life of the school.

Ohio Northern University offers its students, faculty, and staff a number of opportunities for Christian worship and prayer, but most especially through providing a dedicated hour for Chapel Worship each Thursday at 11 a.m. No other University activities are scheduled during this hour. Chapel Worship currently has an average attendance of 136 each week, and includes worship singing, scripture, preaching, prayer, and time for reflection. For those who choose not to attend Chapel, the hour is still dedicated as a time of weekly Sabbath for the entire university community.

In addition to Chapel Worship, there are nine religious life student organizations that offer fellowship meetings, Bible studies, and worship experiences, and the university chapel includes both a prayer room and a multi-faith room. Space has been made available for our Muslim students and faculty for Friday prayers, which meet in a lounge in Clark Hall on Fridays at noon. In 2013, a new program called “Merge” was begun by the Chaplain, with assistance from a grant from the West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church. This group meets weekly under the direction of the Chaplain for group spiritual direction and mutual support and accountability. The program has grown to the point where students who were in the original group in the 2013-14 academic year are now taking on some leadership of the group, and they are currently applying for student organization recognition from the student senate.

The religious life organizations include: Ada Friends, a program of mentoring similar to Big Brothers/Big Sisters; Sigma Theta Epsilon, a Christian service fraternity; Fellowship of Christian Athletes; Christian Pharmacists Fellowship International; Newman Club; Northern Christian Fellowship, which offers weekly Bible studies and a weekly worship service called Fusion; Habitat for Humanity; Kappa Phi, a Christian sisterhood organization; Christian Legal Society, an organization based in the law college for Christians to share in weekly Bible study and reflection; and the Muslim Student Association. In 2014-15, the roster membership of the various religious life related organizations totaled over 800 students.
The office of the Chaplain oversees a number of aspects of student and campus life, including: providing worship for the campus community, overseeing religious student organizations, relating to the East and West Ohio annual conferences of The United Methodist Church, relating to the Ada Ministerial Association and area churches and places of worship of all faiths, officiating or coordinating memorial services/funerals and weddings in the English Chapel, volunteer management (Get Connected ONU), pastoral counseling/spiritual direction, administering the Ada Friends mentoring program, and special event programming in the Chapel.

The chapel staff consists of the Chaplain, a full-time administrative assistant, and five student staff members. Our current chaplain is the Rev. Dr. David MacDonald, an ordained elder and member of the East Ohio Conference of the UMC, who joined ONU in July 2012. The student staff members are each assigned a specific area of work, but generally work together as a full team when needed. These positions are: Programming Coordinator, Music Coordinator, Tech Team Coordinator, Ada Friends Coordinator, and Community Relations Coordinator. In addition to her administrative duties, the administrative assistant also oversees the Chapel outreach program, which sends three performing groups (Gospel Ensemble, Northern Chimes, and Son’s Rays) out to local churches for performances and worship leadership.

The office of the Chaplain relates to the university governance system through the Religious Affairs Committee. The Religious Affairs committee helps the chaplain to set and implement policies relating to religious life on campus. Committee membership consists of elected faculty, a representative of the Philosophy/Religion department, a member of the religious life student
staff, and the student senate secretary of religious affairs. The Chaplain serves as the chair, and thus also serves as an ex-officio member of the monthly Faculty Meeting and the University Council. Recently, the Religious Affairs Committee has been instrumental in helping to shape the University’s baccalaureate celebration, and is responsible for approving student religious organizations. The committee is also currently working on a policy relating to off-campus religious life affiliates (organizations such as Cru, Young Life, and local churches), especially regarding current Title IX policies.

The Christian practice of service is fostered through the university’s volunteer management program, called Get Connected ONU. This program is run by the office of the Chaplain, and connects the campus community with volunteer opportunities in Ada and the surrounding region through VolunteerMatch.org. The campus has recently taken on the project of sending volunteers to Our Daily Bread soup kitchen in Lima once a month, as a way of fostering volunteer service across departmental and college divisions. Get Connected ONU serves as a vital link to help the university community build important bridges to the community through service and action.

Additionally, the Ada Civic Engagement Day, or ACE Day, is a University tradition held on the Saturday of Welcome Weekend. ACE Day provides an opportunity for incoming freshmen to serve the Ada community, their new home for the next four, five or six years. Projects include a variety of tasks, such as painting, gardening, washing fire trucks and more. ACE Day is centered on a quote from John Wesley: "Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can."

4. A church-related institution willingly allows faculty and students to explore the place of religious belief and practice and, specifically, the intellectual dimensions of Christian faith in all academic disciplines and co-curricular activities.

The University’s commitment of the exploration of the role of religious belief in the lives of our faculty and students is made explicit in the Faculty Handbook. Along with teaching, scholarship, service and collegiality, faculty are admonished to be particularly sensitive to this aspect of University life.

Religious Expectations of Faculty Members: As a church-related institution the moral and spiritual dimension of life is an integral part of the university community. ONU regards the goal of the educational process to be the development of the whole person, and seeks to provide an environment in which students may achieve maximum growth intellectually, socially, morally, and spiritually. Although faculty are not required to subscribe to any doctrinal statement or creed, nor associate with any church or church tradition, the role of faculty member includes both effective instruction and concern for values which support and encourage students in their moral and ethical development. Faculty members are expected to take seriously this aspect of university life and contribute to it.

(Faculty Handbook, Section 2.3, pages 17-19, paragraph 6)
The Chapel is at the physical center of campus, anchoring the residential, social, academic, and extra-curricular aspects of university life in the Wesleyan/Methodist tradition. The programs of the Chaplain’s office offer students, faculty, and staff the opportunity to explore the intellectual dimensions of Christian faith by creating space where conversations about the “big questions” can be discussed in a respectful manner. The Chaplain’s office co-sponsors monthly cultural conversation hours with the Office of Multicultural Development, during which a variety of topics are discussed throughout the year, examining the cultural, religious, political, and socioeconomic perspectives on each topic.

The University has recently begun an effort, funded by a grant from the [Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE)](https://www.netvue.org), to foster a dialogue on campus around the topic of vocation. A vocational study team has been convened by the Chaplain, consisting of representatives from all five colleges, Student Affairs, and Academic Affairs. This team has recently published a white paper defining vocation from the Christian/United Methodist perspective, taking into account the various ways the term vocation is utilized in the five colleges on campus. The next stage of this project is to fund a series of mini-grants that will encourage interdisciplinary cooperation in developing curriculum, faculty, and student leadership. The end result of the grant will be to create a common understanding (or common language) of vocation for the university community, which will shape curriculum and programming in the years to come.

5. **A church-related institution encourages the exploration of the place of religious belief and practice in the larger society and advocates appropriate recognition of the contributions of religion to public life.**

In addition to the courses offered by the religion department and the activities of the religious life groups discussed previously, a sampling of how Ohio Northern University has recognized the role of religious belief and practice in the larger society follows.

- The University maintains a tradition of beginning all major campus events (such as convocation, commencement, banquets, award ceremonies, etc.) with prayer.

- Last year, the University hosted a panel discussion on science and religion which explored the contemporary view that many think that science and religion are "at war" with each other. This overly simplistic "conflict view" neglects the ways that religion and science historically have been complementary sometimes, while at other times in competition. ONU philosophy and religion faculty were joined by faculty from Goshen College for the panel.

- Last year, the University hosted Janiesse Ray, a writer, naturalist, and sustainability activist who came to ONU as a Council of Independent Colleges' (CIC) Woodrow Wilson Visiting Fellow.

- The University has hosted two panel discussions on human trafficking, which have been co-sponsored by the office of the Chaplain.
The University has been involved in the National Day of Prayer, and in September 2015, hosted the National Day of Prayer bus tour on campus.

We hold an annual commemoration of Veterans Day, in conjunction with the local VFW, which is planned in cooperation between the Chaplain, members of the Ohio Northern Veterans Organization, and the VFW.

The conversations held about vocation as part of the NetVUE grant have led to a greater understanding of vocation as both a personal and communal concept. The intention of the mini-grants is to foster that conversation in the classroom, student advising, and student leadership development.

ONU’s off-campus Legal Clinic is located in downtown Lima. It offers legal services to low-income area residents and nonprofit corporations in Allen and Hardin counties. The clinic also works closely with the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church to help local churches with incorporation and issues pertaining to mergers, consolidation and risk-management. Last year, 30 students performed more than 3,500 service hours and served more than 150 individuals. In 2014, five United Methodist Churches were represented, along with 11 additional non-profit organizations. In 2015, the Clinic has thus far represented 10 churches and 15 additional non-profits.

Ohio Northern University biennially hosts the West Ohio Conference Annual Legal Forum that is attended by pastors, church staff administrators, and local church committee leadership. The topics presented vary from year to year, but over the past 20 years, the ONU law clinic has been able to provide the conference chancellor with a summary of the most frequent types of inquiries to shape the contents of the forum.

6. A church-related institution recognizes the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church and seeks to create a community of scholarship and learning which facilitates social justice.

Members of our faculty are committed to integrating issues of social justice into the curriculum whenever appropriate. For instance, the Philosophy and Religion department teaches courses on Women in Religion, and Post-colonial biblical interpretation, and the Youth Ministry major within the department requires students to do at least one of their three observations in a setting that is culturally, racially, and/or socioeconomically diverse (Book of Discipline, ¶162 A). The College of Pharmacy has recently received a grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to create a mobile clinic which will allow the college to reach out to underserved populations and focus on the dignity of all persons and their rights to effective health care (¶162 V). The Center for Democratic Governance and Rule of Law, located in the Law college, provides an LLM degree to persons from developing democracies, who are then able to return to their home countries to improve conditions in their governments and judicial systems (¶164). In the College of Business Administration, courses are taught that focus on ethics in business and investment practices, and corporate responsibility (¶163 I). The Engineering college offers courses in Water Resources and Environmental Engineering, and the
university as a whole has made a commitment to sustainability and wise use of natural resources ([¶160 A, B]). These examples show the depth and breadth of the university’s commitment to honoring the United Methodist “DNA” that is part of our heritage, while engaging pressing issues of today.

7. A church-related institution includes in its faculty, administrative officers, and board of trustees persons who understand and respect the relationship with The United Methodist Church.

The University Board of Trustees consists of no more than 42 voting members. The Resident Bishop of the West Ohio Conference and a minimum of six others represent the United Methodist Church. (At least three trustees must be a member of the West Ohio Conference and at least one trustee must represent the East Ohio Conference.) Currently, 12 of the voting trustees are members of the United Methodist Church. Four of these are clergy.

The Provost previously served for several years as the chair of the West OH Conference Board of Trustees. Currently, two University employees serve on the trustees. Dr. Bryan Ward, Assistant Dean in the College of Law, serves as vice-chair, and Dr. Julie Hurtig, Associate VPAA, is a member of the board.

The President and his wife are both active worshippers and supporters at Ada First UMC, the local congregation in the Village of Ada. Within the President’s nine-member cabinet, three additional staff are members of the United Methodist Church (the Provost and the Associate VPAA). Three others are associate members or were members at one time in the United Methodist Church. The local congregation at Ada First typically has 150 people in attendance for a Sunday service, and approximately 40 of these are employees or retirees of the University. An additional dozen or so members are alumni of the University. Most of the congregation’s administrative committees are presently chaired by ONU employees or alums, including the chair of administrative council, finance, staff-parish relations, worship, and trustees.

In March 2012, the building of Ada First UMC was destroyed by fire. Within 24 hours, the President and other University administrators had arranged for Ada First UMC to worship in the University’s chapel on Sunday mornings. The chapel became the local congregation’s home for the next three years as a new building was constructed. The University also provided office and storage space for the church employees during this time. It was a true blessing to have this physical support free of charge. The presence of the congregation served as a visible reminder to the University community of our relationship to the United Methodist Church.
Ohio Northern University believes that you deserve an education that prepares you for the world ahead. We believe that values can’t be skimped on, and our affiliation with the United Methodist Church means we instill core values into our teachings, while offering religious freedom on campus. We believe that college should be treated as an investment – and our students have seen the highest returns on investment in the entire state. We believe that your time at ONU paves the way for the rest of your life.

With Ada as your backdrop and ONU as your guide, there is not limit to what you can achieve. Five colleges provide nationally ranked arts, sciences and professional programs, and a diverse array of high-impact learning opportunities. At ONU, we believe in high-impact learning. That means that you’ll learn by doing – through internships, community outreach and more.

The world doesn’t stop changing just because a syllabus is set. And there’s a good chance that you’re interested in more than just one area of study. That’s why at ONU, we’ve created a flexible curriculum designed to meet your needs and keep up with the world. Here, you’ll be able to craft a learning experience that suits you perfectly. Low student-to-teacher ratios mean you can work closely with instructors and take on leadership roles early in your education. It’s simple, really. Students who are able to explore their interests create more meaningful experiences for themselves and others, ultimately increasing their chances for success and happiness in their careers.

College is about creating who you will be for the rest of your life – and ONU is perfect for discovering just who that is. Here, you’ll find teachers and students who will help you uncover what you love to do. Whatever you’re interested in, you’ll find a club or group devoted to it at ONU. If there isn’t a club already, you can start one yourself. From intramural sports to student government organizations, these experiences help you develop the passions, hobbies and friendships that will shape your future.

We’ve heard time and time again that our campus is one of our biggest selling points. It’s not hard to see why. We’re set amidst rolling fields in a quiet countryside. The town is close-knit; perfect if you are from a small town yourself, or if you want to have the freedom to focus on what matters to you.

Schedule an individual visit and come see for yourself. It might be a little different from what you expect, and that suits us just fine.

Explore STEM Day – Oct. 3
Polar Preview Day – Oct. 16
Polar Preview Day – Nov. 7