

# The Mission of California Lutheran University

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## A. The University's Mission Statement

California Lutheran University is a diverse scholarly community dedicated to excellence in the liberal arts and professional studies. Rooted in the Lutheran tradition of Christian faith, the University encourages critical inquiry into matters of both faith and reason.

The mission of the University is to educate leaders for a global society who are strong in character and judgment, confident in their identity and vocation and committed to service and justice.

## B. A Reflection on the Founding of the University

Karn Gjerde was not anxious to leave Norway in 1885 when Lars Pederson decided to emigrate to America. "One hears such tales of a wild country with no laws," she declared, urging Lars to go ahead, explore the "new world" and come back for her later if he still wanted to make a home together. Three years later Lars came back. He married Karn and, in 1890, they came together to the Conejo Valley of California where they established a home in the building that we now use as the Music Faculty House. The Pedersons had four children: Peder, Richard, Lawrence and Anna. Together with several other Norwegian emigrants, they purchased 650 acres of adjacent land as acreage primarily for sheep.

When an epidemic swept through the Conejo Valley in 1901, Lars Pederson was among the victims, leaving Karn with four small children, the eldest nine years old and the youngest four months old. For years she managed the farm with her children before moving to Santa Barbara. Her sons later returned to operate the farm. Karn died in 1960 at the age of 92.

In the 1950s, Pastor Orville Dahl was commissioned by a joint committee of three Lutheran church bodies – the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC), the American Lutheran Church (ALC) and the Augustana Lutheran Church (Augustana) – to seek out a sight in southern California for a new Lutheran college. Representatives of a fourth synod, the United Lutheran Church (ULC), soon joined the effort. More than 20 Lutheran colleges or universities had been founded in North America during the 19th century; in contrast, none had been founded during the first half of the 20th century. An inter-Lutheran study in 1954 noted that among Protestant churches in North America, only the Lutherans had no four-year college in California; other Protestant churches had a total of 16 and the Roman Catholic church had 12 schools.

Working with a "Committee of 25" convened by Dr. Gaylerd Falde, then president of the California District of the ELC, Orville Dahl conducted the search for a location, visiting more than 50 possible sites. On September 24, 1957, he toured the 130-acre ranch with Karn's son, Richard Pederson. Richard later stated:

I made the gift of the ranch to provide youth the benefits of Christian education in a day when spiritual values can well decide the course of history.

The Pedersons left the ranch in January 1958, and a few days later the California Lutheran Education Foundation (CLEF) moved from Los Angeles into their former ranch house. The house originally faced north toward Mt. Clef and stood where Ahmanson Science Center now stands; during the construction of the Science Center, the ranch house was moved to its present location facing east on Regents Drive where it currently serves as an office building for the music faculty. The former ranch house is preserved, along with the original water tower house, on the Ventura County roster of historic sites.

(See further, Mary Hekhuis, *California Lutheran College: The First Quarter Century*, pp. 1-34.)

## c. California Lutheran University and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

As one of 27 colleges and universities in North America related to the ELCA, CLU affirms and celebrates a rich and diverse heritage of academic freedom. The Lutheran tradition in higher education grew out of the experiences of Martin Luther (1483-1546), a professor at the University of Wittenberg, Germany, who in the 16th century became a leading voice of conscience in the Protestant Reformation.

The University purposely seeks out and recruits faculty of diverse backgrounds, some of whom can represent and articulate the specific Lutheran heritage of the school and others whose presence makes possible a greater sense of integrity and perspective in discussions and debates about our world and its inhabitants.

The Lutheran tradition views education as an important part of the church's ministry, but it approaches it in a way different from some other Christian traditions. Lutherans, for example, have never believed that all aspects of creation must be understood exclusively in terms of direct divine revelation. As Lutherans see it, the created orders of nature and human experience must be studied on their own terms, just as matters of faith and revelation are appropriately studied in their own ways. This approach grants to each of these realms its own unique and distinctive importance, and empowers scholars in Lutheran institutions to understand religious, cultural, and intellectual diversity, as well as differences in methodological approach, as an aid, not a threat, to deeper understanding. In this way, faculty at a Lutheran university enjoy full academic and scholarly freedom.

The Lutheran tradition affirms the biblical vision of shalom, (“well-being” or “peace”) for the world and its inhabitants, life that is meaningful and productive, and concern for a just society where there is compassion for the poor and care for the earth. In these concerns, we as a faculty community aspire to be united by mutual respect, tolerance and an appreciation for questions concerning divine mystery.

#### **D. The Governing Boards and the University President**

The Charter of California Lutheran University is part of the Articles of Incorporation, approved by the Secretary of State of California, August 4, 1959.

##### **1. The Convocation of the University**

The Convocation of the University is the authorized body for considering all matters affecting the interests and well being of the University. The Convocation makes recommendations to the Board of Regents and elects the majority of the members of the Board of Regents.

Membership of the Convocation consists of 85 representatives from synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, from the faculty and from the student body and 10 members elected at large, including the President of the University.

Six faculty members represent the faculty as members of the Convocation. Faculty are elected for three-year terms at the September faculty meeting each year.

##### **2. The Board of Regents**

The Board of Regents is the legal governing body and the chartered legal entity for California Lutheran University. As such, it has final institutional authority and grants all degrees awarded by the institution upon the recommendation of the faculty. The Board of Regents' primary responsibility is to review the general educational policies and academic goals of the University. In so doing, the board will oversee the University's financial resources with concern for future needs and care that the Lutheran tradition of higher education may serve both as a guide and an inspiration for future developments.

While maintaining a general overview, the board entrusts the conduct of administration to the President and, through the President, to other administrative officers of the institution. The board entrusts to the faculty the conduct of teaching and research. Upon appeal, the board will review and defend the President, members of the faculty, or members of the student body when and if attacks on academic freedom are lodged.

The Board of Regents manages and administers the University within defined policy limits. The board will elect the President of the University.

The faculty chair is a member of the Board of Regents and represents the faculty at their regular meetings.

##### **3. The University President**

The President is the chief administrative officer of the University and the official channel of communication between students, faculty and administration on the one hand and the Board of Regents, the Convocation and the general constituencies on the other. The President is directly responsible to the Board of Regents.

(For further information on the university administration, see Section Three.X.)