



## Journal of the Christian Society for Kinesiology, Leisure and Sports Studies

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Volume 6

Issue 1 *Journal of the Christian Society for Kinesiology,  
Leisure and Sport Studies*

Article 2

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8-9-2019

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### Recommended Citation

Ventura, Jessica D. (2019) "WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR? The Importance of Global Education for Kinesiology Students," *Journal of the Christian Society for Kinesiology, Leisure and Sports Studies*: Vol. 6 : Iss. 1 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jcskls/vol6/iss1/2>

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## WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR? The Importance of Global Education for Kinesiology Students

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### Abstract

The parable of the Samaritan in the Gospel of Luke illustrates that helping others requires both the ability to reach out to *any person* and the humility to receive mercy from *any person*. This active love requires a basic understanding of culture and the ways in which it may affect the values and actions of others. As believers seeking to express God in careers that bring them in contact with *any person*, kinesiology students have a specific need to understand their global neighbors. This paper first explores the importance of multicultural education as illustrated in the book of Acts and the epistles to the churches. Educational outcomes for guiding students through different stages of intercultural sensitivity are provided. Finally, examples of multicultural programs that colleges and universities are implementing in the health professions are presented.

*Keywords: Multicultural, Health Professions, Christian Undergraduate*

### Introduction

The parable of the Good Samaritan in the gospel of Luke is treasured by many Christians in the health professions. The parable stems from a question regarding how to inherit eternal life:

And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And He said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.” But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Luke 10:25-29, NASB

Jesus replies with the story of a Samaritan who, unlike the priest or the Levite, rescues a beaten man on the road to Jericho, pouring oil and wine in his wounds and bringing him to the inn where he pays for the man’s care (Luke 10: 30-37). While many lessons can be taken from this story, this paper will respond to two that relate directly to the command to *love your neighbor as yourself*.

The first lesson comes from the description (or lack thereof) of the beaten man. The description of this man is not only omitted from the listeners of the story, but also from the characters themselves. Stripped of his clothes and left half dead, likely unable to talk, the markers of class and race were also stripped from him (Luke 10:30). The man is void of ethnic background, void of stature, void of position (Slick, n.d.). The crowd listening to the telling of this story will assume that this man is like them (Blomberg, 2012) and in their heart consider rendering aid to him as something they would be willing and ready to do. However, *any person* does not mean *any person like me* but *any person, even my enemy*.

Jesus ends the parable with an interesting question, “So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” Herein lies the second lesson. We ask who is our neighbor? The answer is, “He who showed mercy on him.” From this viewpoint, the neighbor is not the beaten man on the road but the Samaritan despised by such respected Jews as this lawyer yet showing him love (Lee, 2001; Blomberg, 2012). Thus, to love your neighbor as yourself involves being open to receive mercy from *any person*. When Jesus follows with, “Go and do likewise,” He reveals that while the neighbor is the caring Samaritan, the lawyer must also become such neighbor. Regardless of our cultural or personal history with those we meet in this life, to be a neighbor requires both a receiving and a pouring out of love through genuine care. As Craig Blomberg puts it,

Then, if ethnicity or race of religion, or any other category of separating one group of humans from another, affects our decision as to whether or not to get involved, we have become as hypocritical as the priest and Levite in Jesus’ story (Blomberg, 2012, p. 303)

Many students of Kinesiology put in long hours studying the human body with a certain objective: to help others. As professors we foster future therapists, physicians, nurses, coaches and trainers whose primary career description is to help those in need. While bestowing our specialized knowledge of particular aspects of the human body and its functions we also have the opportunity to remind these students of the lessons in Luke chapter 10: Helping others requires (a) the ability to reach out to *any person* whom God places in our path and (b) the humility to receive mercy ourselves, even from those to whom we may be reaching out.

In a world that is becoming incredibly diverse through globalization, these directives become increasingly difficult to follow simply because we do not understand the people with whom we come in contact. Not long ago, members of a community lived together for generations. They had the same history, stories and values. Even within the relatively new and dynamic United States, immigrants into an established community were considered outsiders until they accepted the community’s culture as their own. Increased urbanization and growth of industrial, commercial and academic hubs has brought people together from all walks of life. So our neighbor really is *any person*. And thereby the directive to love our neighbor as ourselves becomes difficult. While a Christian can love this person in his heart with the love that Christ has for each human created in His image, how can one show that love to someone whose needs and values may be completely different from one’s own? This action requires a certain level of multicultural sensitivity, a basic understanding of culture and the ways in which it may affect the

values and actions of our global neighbors. It also requires a sense of humility, not placing our own culture above that of others.

Unfortunately, it is common for Christian institutions of higher education in the US to host predominantly Caucasian American students and faculty. When this happens, the learning environment does not naturally lead students to understand their global neighbors and the role their culture and life experiences can play in enriching these students' lives. Administrators and educators who value multicultural sensitivity then must take a proactive approach to integrate these lessons into the fiber of their programs and curricula. This manuscript explores the theological basis of a multicultural education to Christian students and proposes educational outcomes while providing examples from undergraduate programs.

### **Theological Basis**

The thought of our neighbor being *any person* is not only expressed in Jesus' exclusion of a description of the man in the parable of the Good Samaritan or even in His earthly ministry. We can also see numerous examples of New Testament believers confronting cultural differences in both evangelism and church living.

#### ***The Gospel***

In the wake of His resurrection, Jesus commanded His followers to bring the good news to *any person*:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 28:19

Yet Jesus' followers were slow to respond to the call to bring the gospel to all nations. Accustomed to dealing with Jews only, they spoke the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the synagogues. In their minds, bringing the gospel to the Jews who congregated in the synagogue in Jerusalem may have been to bring it to every nation, as the Jews were a scattered people united by their devotion to the Jewish laws and heritage but separated by language and nation (Acts 2:5-6). Even among the Jews congregating in the synagogue at Pentecost, the first cultural barrier had to be crossed by the Holy Spirit (Flemming, 2005). While the New Testament gospel message was given in the context of the Jewish religion, tying it culturally to the Jews, the Holy Spirit gave these devout men the ears to hear the words in their own language. Surely the Jews who traveled to Jerusalem for Pentecost would have understood a message delivered in Aramaic. But the Holy Spirit chose to speak to them in a language that would touch their very core, the language used in their daily lives. This miracle was necessary to signal the separation of the New Testament gospel from the Jewish law and culture (Flemming, 2005). For in fulfilling the Jewish law, Christ brought a new gospel in its stead (Matt 5:17-18; Rom 10:4; Gal 3:23-25; Eph 2:15).

The early believers seemed content to speak the word and build up the church in Jerusalem. So the Holy Spirit scattered them by allowing persecution and death from leaders in Jerusalem (Acts 8:4-5; 11:19-21). Still, cultural boundaries were much more difficult to cross than regional ones. The first to receive the word were the Samaritans (Acts 8:4-5), who were considered to be at the fringes of Judaic religion and culture (Flemming, 2005). Phillip could speak the gospel to this group of people in terms of Christ the Messiah, a cultural reference they readily understood. While Phillip's conversion and baptism of an Ethiopian eunuch using words of the prophet Isaiah crossed cultural boundaries (Acts 8:26-39), others were slow to speak to anyone but the Jews (Acts 11:19). It took men of Cyprus and Cyrene, far from the Jewish center and influence, to begin the spread of the gospel to the Greeks and the Lord's blessing upon them to confirm its validity (Acts 11:20-21).

Paul preached primarily to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles (Acts 13:44-48). He tailored each message to his particular audience (Flemming, 2005). To the Jews in the synagogue in Antioch, he spoke of the death and resurrection of Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel and of belief in the gospel accomplishing what the Mosaic law could not (Acts 13: 13-41). To the pagan Gentiles in Lystra who wanted to worship him and Barnabas as gods, Paul spoke of the Creator God who graciously provided for the nations even while they went their own way (Acts 14:8-20). And to the idol-worshipping Gentiles in Athens, he described the Lord of heaven and earth as the 'unknown god' that they were seeking, the God who made every nation of mankind and placed a seeking after Him in their hearts and who He will judge in righteousness (Acts: 17:22-33). In his wisdom and understanding of the cultures surrounding him, Paul was able to bring the word in a manner directed toward *any person* he spoke to.

Paul was able to separate the light of the gospel from his own culture and Jewish tradition. In this way, the gospel he preached was Jesus Christ and not the Jewish religion. And yet, his preaching was not void of cultural references. That is, he did not discount the value of culture and tradition. Rather, Paul (as did the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and Phillip with the Ethiopian) identified with each group of people to bring the gospel message in terms that they could understand and that would touch their being.

### ***The Oneness of the Church***

Cultural boundaries were a much bigger obstacle to the oneness of the church. The Holy Spirit used two visions, one of a devout centurion and another of the apostle Peter, to bring the Gentile believers into the church life. The Holy Spirit's words to Peter, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy," were so revolutionary that it took three repetitions for him to realize that God's command to Peter to eat "unholy" food was not a test (Acts 10:13-16). Being led by the Holy Spirit to a Gentile household, Peter realized he "should not call any man unholy or unclean (Acts 10:28)." God's coming to the Gentiles in this way was the signaling of a transfer

from the Old Testament to the New Testament covenant (Lee, 1986). In order to practice oneness, the Jews would have to let go of the Jewish ordinances that separated them from the Gentiles. God began with the issue of diet. This lesson was a great one for the ethnocentric Jews and the detail of Peter's retelling of each step of the Holy Spirit's working showed the difficulty in convincing the Jewish Christian leaders of God's new move (Acts 11:17-18; Flemming, 2005). This was a move not simply to speak the gospel to a few Gentiles, but to bring them into the church life and into oneness with the Jewish believers.

The journey for the Gentiles' inclusion into the church had only just begun. Differences in cultural values and norms continued to plague the Jewish and Gentile believers throughout the New Testament. Even Peter, the apostle chosen by the Holy Spirit to open the way for the Gentiles to hear the gospel, struggled with how to integrate the faith with his living among the Gentile believers (Gal. 2:11-12). The apostle Paul had to remind Peter that the Christian faith was not tied to the Jewish religion (Gal. 2:15-16). Clearly, Peter recognized differences between his manner of living and that of the Gentiles, and in attempt to keep the oneness had begun to walk the line of living among them while holding his integrity as a Jew. Yet pressures from other believers who held onto their old ways of living threatened to break this oneness.

In his book to the church in Ephesus, Paul assured the believers that Christ on the cross abolished the negative, dividing elements of the old creation to form the church as a new creation in Himself (Eph. 2:14-16). The walls dividing these polarized people, the different ways of living and worshipping, were abolished by Christ's death on the cross (Lee, 1991). He then placed all persons in Himself, making them new. One might conclude, *So if the different ways of living and worshipping have been abolished, we must ignore all cultures and cleave only to Christ*. While Christ is indeed our oneness, we must remember that the new creation did not come out of nothing. This newness came out from the old (Darko, 2012). The old culture, norms, ways of living remained in the earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:17). The believers did not leave these things behind and pick up a new "Christian culture." Their oneness was in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:30) and they allowed Him to resurrect their old manner of living so that it could become new and uplifted in Him (2 Cor. 5:17).

Learning how to live in practical oneness despite the differences that remained was clearly a struggle for the Corinthian believers. Paul addressed the rifts between the believers head-on in the opening of his first epistle to the Corinthians (1:10). These rifts were not necessarily theologically based and, according to David Garland (2003), were likely interpersonal. The groups claiming to be of Paul, Apollos, Cephas or Christ exemplify the tendency of fallen human nature to divide into factions (1 Cor. 1:12). As he did in the Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul again brought the believers back to Christ and His cross as the solution to the problems in the church (1 Cor. 1:13-18; Lee, 1991). In their rifts the Corinthian believers were exalting their way of thinking above that of others, so Paul reminded them that man's wisdom is foolishness to God (1

Cor. 1:18-31). Here we see the importance of humbling ourselves before our fellow believers, realizing that God even chooses to use what we might consider foolish or weak to showcase His wisdom.

Paul then dealt with specific divisive issues throughout the rest of the epistle. For example, he exhorted the Corinthian believers to respect one another in eating and drinking (1 Cor 10:31-33), that while all things may be permissible to one not all things edify (I Cor. 10:23). Paul also reminded them that as individual members of Christ's body they must have the same care for one another (1 Cor. 12:24-27). Both these exhortations make it clear that while individual differences between believers may cause division, the response is not for each member to drop those differences and lose one's individualism. Rather, Paul presented a *more excellent way* to dealing with the divisions in the church: Love (1 Cor 13). Love is the response to the differences among us. Love, who is God Himself (1 John 4:8), builds one expression from so many individuals (1 Peter 2:5). This is how His multifarious wisdom is made known through the church (Eph. 3:10).

### ***Today's Battle***

Just as the battle in the New Testament was to keep the Christian faith from being unduly constrained by the Jewish culture, so it continues today in different cultures. Americans sharing the gospel will often express various American brands of the good news (Rah, 2013) and, even worse, the gospel may be used at times to promote White America or US nationalism (Borthwick, 2012; Twiss, 2013). While each individual and each culture has the capacity to express God, we must be careful not to constrain the glory of God to our narrow or self-glorifying version of it. Christians from different nations have much to contribute to our understanding of the gospel of God. For example, those in oppressed nations may know about carrying the cross daily and remaining faithful, those in poor situations about boasting in Christ rather than in possessions or accomplishments, and those where the gospel is being preached to remote places the joy of proclaiming Christ's name (Borthwick, 2012).

As believers seeking to express God in careers that bring them in contact with *any person*, kinesiology students have the opportunity to recognize where differences between their own culture and that of others becomes a dividing wall. Students may allow the cross of Christ to tear down their personal ways of thinking and make them new in Him, and to be open to God's using of the foolish and weak things of the world to express His wisdom and glory. Eventually, God will be corporately expressed through the oneness of His believers in an uplifted humanity that maintains the individuality of the believers:

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb

Revelation 7:9

### The Application

If our students are to disallow cultural differences to act as a barrier between themselves and others, they must understand culture. Culture itself is complex in nature. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck break down culture into five dimensions, described as human nature, man-nature, time, activity, and relational value orientations (Rockwood, 1961). While global education programs can expose students to foreign cultures, each student will confront and deal with the cultural differences based on his worldview and understanding of culture. If a student has not been exposed to worldviews that differ from her own, she will assume that everyone holds to similar beliefs. Thus, the first step in attaining multicultural sensitivity is to understand these five dimensions of culture.

When designing and implementing multicultural programs, one should keep the following questions continually in mind: *Where are the students at in their cultural understanding?* and *Where do we want them to be?* Milton Bennett (2004) divides the six stages of intercultural sensitivity into two categories: ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism. He describes the term ethnocentrism as the experience of one's own culture being central to reality, "the way things are." The three stages within this category are denial, defense, and minimization of difference. Ethnorelativism is then "the experience of one's own culture as just one organization of reality among many viable possibilities." The three stages within this category are acceptance, adaptation, and integration of difference.

At the narrowest experience of ethnocentrism, a person expresses *denial* of cultural difference. He or she is either entirely unaware that other persons may hold to different beliefs and behaviors or is disinterested in recognizing the differences. While personal experience might bring awareness, the role culture plays in beliefs and behavior will not always be obvious to the students. Therefore, cultural education can help students identify the differences that they are coming in contact with. Once a person is aware of differences in culture, the next stage is *defense* of one culture over the other, considering one set of beliefs and behaviors as "correct" or "better than the other." While it is more common that a student will consider his or her own cultural norms in a better light, students may defend the foreign culture instead. Students should be educated about this natural tendency to rank cultural beliefs and behaviors so that they will more readily recognize this response when they confront cultural differences. One way that students move on from defense is through *minimization* of the differences between cultures. Students may attempt to understand a foreign cultural behavior while making faulty assumptions that other beliefs or behaviors are similar to their own culture. In this stage, educating students about their own culture can be particularly helpful. When students see that their own culture does not universally apply to all persons, they will be less likely to assume that people in other cultures will fit their expectations.



The most basic stage of ethnorelativism is *acceptance* of cultural difference. In this stage, students are able to experience the other culture to some depth. Students who manifest acceptance are able to view their peers in the context of their respective cultures. They judge the person's behaviors and beliefs relative to those that are held to by their community of origin. In the stage of *adaptation*, a student's behavior will be changed to be more appropriate to the cultural beliefs and behaviors. The student will take on the new worldview in addition to her own culture, broadening the elements that define herself. *Integration* is different than adaptation in that the students compartmentalize their different cultural worldviews. Rather than taking on new beliefs and behaviors, they will move in and out of a cultural worldview as warranted by the situation.

Because the stages of ethnorelativism require a deeper experience of foreign cultures, they are not easily presented by educators so as to instill change in student behavior. And the question remains, *Should they be?* The barriers that the New Testament believers confronted on their way to oneness were certainly not simple to overcome. Barriers between the Jews and Gentiles were so great that they required something as final as the cross of Christ and as powerful as His resurrection. As educators, I believe our goal should be to bring these students to an understanding of culture that sets them up for the Holy Spirit's deeper work within, a work that will likely last a lifetime. These deeper stages of acceptance, adaptation, and integration should be navigated by the Father. Yet we can help our students begin this journey of multicultural understanding that will help them love their neighbor in a deeper, truer way.

### **Learning by Example**

Many Christian institutions have taken a proactive approach to increasing multicultural sensitivity of their students. This section provides some examples of programs implemented by institutions specifically for students in the health professions.

#### ***Programs Abroad***

When considering means of providing global education, the most obvious is to send students abroad to be immersed in a new culture. Traditional study abroad programs involve students enrolling in a college or university for a semester. But taking a semester abroad can be a challenge for students in the sciences, particularly those attempting to complete prerequisite courses for a graduate program. Administrators can pave the way for students to complete required courses abroad by forging relationships with sister institutions and pre-approving courses within their major. For example, Simon Frasier University (n.d.) provides their student with a list of exchange destinations and detail of how their courses abroad will be credited. By taking the initiative in this way, administrators are also able to choose sister institutions that will provide the most valuable experiences for the students both culturally and academically.

Many colleges have taken study abroad programs to another level by developing semester-long experiences for the students and even sending faculty to teach the courses. While most of these programs are not designed for undergraduate kinesiology students, a few have started to emerge. Azusa Pacific's South Africa Semester (2018) is designed for undergraduate nursing students. The first half of the semester is spent doing core and nursing course work in the classroom, with weekend cultural outings, and the second half of the semester is spent in the field doing clinical and service-learning projects. Calvin College's Developmental Studies program (2018) in Honduras may be of interest to students studying community health. The program provides students with three developmental courses plus one course in the Spanish language and is followed by a for-credit two-week internship in community development organization, related to specific topics ranging from micro-enterprise to health.

Internships abroad in allied health profession positions are an excellent way for students to be immersed in a new culture. Wheaton College (2018) prepares the students in their *Human Needs and Global Resources* program for a six-month internship with five required courses and follows up with them upon their return with a weekend retreat and a seminar course. In 2011, I worked with a student in Gordon College's Elijah Project (2013) to place him in a summer internship at a rehabilitation center in Honduras. The Elijah Project was an honors program that "facilitates reflection and discernment regarding vocation as a response to the needs of the world and the call of God." The structure of the program was ideal for providing both the student with guided freedom to choose an internship most related to their calling and the college with added assurance that the students will represent them well in an overseas internship. The new Global Honors Program (Gordon College, 2018) is filling those goals in an expanded way.

### ***International Seminars***

The International Seminar program at Gordon College (2018) is an offering of courses taught abroad by college faculty during semester breaks. I have led the seminar hosted by the Kinesiology Department, *Health and Healthcare in the Developing World*, with the goal of giving students a peek into the perception of disability and disease in developing countries and how people are cared for through their healthcare systems and local NGOs. The course material was interwoven into a 10-day visit to Belize. Field trips into the community were encompassed by reading, lecture and class discussion. The students' immersion experience was carefully planned and cultural lessons were addressed as the class experienced them together. The field trip's impact that most surprised me was the visit to the chamber of commerce, as insights into the area's governmental and economic structures brought understanding to the healthcare issues we were confronting. Just as important as planned field trips were outings into the community as we traveled between locations or walked to the coffee shop. There we witnessed the general population going about their daily affairs and navigated uneven sidewalks and roadways. While the seminar was of short duration, the immersion experience it did provide was effective in opening the students' eyes to a world beyond that in which they live.

Academic institutions have begun to follow the short-term missions model common in North American churches. Models include an on-campus course to design a product or program for summer mission implementation like The University of Texas' *Projects with Underserved Communities* (2018) and the pairing of faculty and students for extracurricular global projects like Letourneau University's *Center for Global Service Learning* (2018). These programs provide academically guided global outreach opportunities for students. Kinesiology professors and students planning a health or health education outreach project should access the information available through Stanford's *Center of Innovation in Global Health* (2013), particularly the web-based course "Ethical Challenges in Short-Term Global Health Training".

### ***Community Outreach***

Cultural immersion does not have to involve international travel. The United States is so multicultural that service-learning projects with nearby communities can provide a significant cultural experience. The *Agape Center for Service and Learning* at Messiah College (2018) facilitates a number of curricular and co-curricular avenues for service learning. Courses in which "students participate in an authentic service activity which meets needs identified by the community and then they critically reflect on that activity" are offered in a number of departments, including Gerontology and Human Development and Family Science. A good example of extracurricular service-learning opportunities, the Baylor Medical Service Organization at Baylor University (n.d.) provides a means for community involvement to students interested in health care.

### ***On Campus Programs***

Multicultural education should not be limited to off-campus programming. Rather, it can and should be integrated into the fiber of the campus. A way to accomplish this without many added resources is to integrate non-western thought into class content (Twiss, 2013). Just as the economy is global, so should be our students' education. In his book *Medicine, Rationality and Experience: An Anthropological Perspective*, B.J. Good (1994) states that "claims that biomedicine provides straightforward, objective depictions of the natural order, an empirical order of biological universals, external to culture, no longer seem tenable and must be submitted to critical analysis." (p. 22) Professors can gain some multicultural learning of the topics they teach and integrate some of the diverse viewpoints into even their most basic science courses. Specific courses that address cultural issues abound in the liberal arts curriculum but are not often directed toward undergraduate science students. George Washington University (2018) offers an undergraduate course in *Impact of Culture Upon Health* that deals with relationships between cultural values and the development of modern health systems based on Western models of health care practice. Nutrition courses can be developed that specifically address diets around the world, restricted by geography and religious beliefs. At Gordon College, I teach a seminar course for students interested in medical missions that deals with common diseases and

physical disabilities of people in developing countries, local structures in place to provide for the sick and disabled, and models followed by foreign NGOs.

There are a variety of ways to promote a multicultural environment on campus. Most campuses have a number of cultural student organizations and administrators can support their efforts to host multicultural events. International Student Offices consistently do an excellent job to integrate international students into the campus community and culture. While most international students would like to be immersed in the western culture, they also are a great asset to the college by exposing the local students to other ways of thinking. International dorms in which students apply to live in a multicultural setting facilitate such exchanges. Finally, minority hiring of both faculty and staff integrates a variety of cultures to the college, making it a vibrant and varied setting (Twiss, 2013).

### **Conclusion**

This manuscript has explored why multicultural education is important from a biblical perspective, with some examples of the early church from the book of Acts and the epistles of Paul; considered educational outcomes for guiding students through different stages of intercultural sensitivity; and identified examples of how several colleges are currently offering multiculturally related programs. Through God's leading and by His mercy, may we each consider how we can contribute to our students' preparation for the day they hear Christ's directive: "Go and do likewise."

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