

November 21, 2025

Rev. Dr. Brian Friedrich, President  
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Dear Dr. Friedrich,

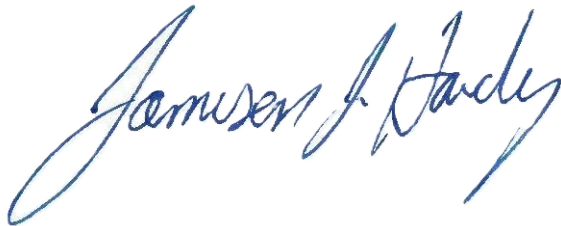
Greetings to you and the Lutheran community of faith at Concordia University, St. Paul.

The 2025 Formal Visitation of your university by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is complete, and the report of findings by the visitation team has been submitted. Having received your institution's review of the report, **the Concordia University System is pleased to report to you that we affirm without concerns Concordia University, St. Paul, and each of its implemented church work programs.**

This letter includes a copy of the report. The letter of determination and a copy of the report will be posted publicly on the Concordia University System website at [www.cus.edu](http://www.cus.edu). We are honored to support and affirm the vital work being done at Concordia University, St. Paul. We will continue to pray for you, help you, and work with you to further the tradition of excellence in Christian education built on the strong Lutheran Confession of Jesus Christ.

The Concordia University System is blessed to boast in the Lord and His gifts of outstanding universities. May His grace strengthen you as we form and educate pious people across many godly vocations in the Church and the world. We thank God for His many blessings, and we thank you for your faithful confession. God bless you all.

In the strong name of Jesus Christ,



The Reverend Dr. Jamison J. Hardy  
President

## Visitation Report

### The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

### Formal Visit to Concordia University, St. Paul

September 17–19, 2025

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The Concordia University System (CUS), in fulfillment of Bylaw 3.6.6.1.a.2, conducted an in-depth ecclesiastical formal visitation at Concordia University, St. Paul (CSP). The visitation team comprised six members: **Rev. Dr. Allan R. Buss, Mrs. Noreen Linke, Rev. Dr. Steven P. Mueller, Dr. Amy Stradtman, Rev. John Berg, and Rev. Peter C. Bender.** CUS President Jamison Hardy and Vice President Douglas Spittel assisted the team. The final visitation debrief was observed and supervised by CUS Board of Directors Chairman Mark Braden, representing the Board in accordance with Bylaw 3.6.6.4.2. The team spent three days on the campus of CSP, interacting with the campus community and conducting group and individual interviews. As the report states, these visitation days were productive and positive times of interaction with the university.

This was the first formal visitation conducted under the bylaw revisions created by 2023 Synod Convention Resolution 7-04b, utilizing the Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcome Standards (LIMOS) and the associated LIMOS Evaluation Tool.

The formal visitation process is intended to support both formative and summative functions. Based on the LIMOS, it shall engender local development and provide for outside monitoring of formative processes, engaging all institutions fully in intentional and measurable programs intended to advance their expression of Lutheran identity and accomplishment of Christ-centered mission outcomes. It shall also enable the drawing of summative conclusions, concretely identifying strengths and weaknesses in institutions and programs, and ultimately providing a clear rationale for decisions about the continuation or termination of affirmation.

CSP appears to be effectively living out its mission and strategic plan. Elements of the university's mission and strategic plan are highlighted in the hallways and meeting rooms of the university in attractive murals and wall hangings. President Brian Friedrich is providing clear and strong leadership for the university's mission and strategic plan. Following his lead, the administration, department heads, faculty, staff, and coaches are all pulling in the same direction to ensure that the programs of the university are Christ-centered and biblically based. A Lutheran ethos is clearly in evidence throughout the culture of the university. The administration has made outreach to its non-Christian students a priority and engages in ongoing discussions throughout the university on how best to bear witness to Christ among students who are not Christian. The theology faculty has shown itself to be the "queen of the sciences" — being honored in its leadership role by the administration and well respected by the students within the church work programs who are cared for both intellectually and spiritually. The entire team witnessed intentionality among the administrators and faculty in fulfilling a key aspect of the university's promise to students: "CSP [is a university] where Christ is honored, all are welcome, and

Lutheran convictions inform intellectual inquiry and academic pursuits.” President Friedrich appears to be an exemplary Lutheran administrator who is both pastoral in his approach to leadership and firm in his commitments to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

A notable strength of CSP is that, despite the cultural and financial challenges of being a university in the city of St. Paul, it is committed and intentional about remaining a Lutheran university that serves and engages the urban community and culture in which the university resides. Intentional opportunities are given to students whereby faith in Christ might be active in loving service to the community, the less fortunate, and those in need. This aspect of Concordia extends beyond the classroom and gives evidence of the fulfillment of the university’s mission statement: “To prepare students for thoughtful and informed living, for dedicated service to God and humanity, for enlightened care of God’s creation, all within the context of the Christian Gospel.”

The visitation process involved document review, interviews with faculty, staff, students, administrators, and observation of campus life. This report summarizes the team’s key findings, highlighting areas of strength and opportunities for growth. It also includes recommendations aimed at supporting CSP’s continued commitment to its Lutheran identity and its pursuit of excellence in all areas of university life as it carries out its mission and strategic plan. It will also explore how CSP’s Lutheran identity shapes academic experiences, student life, and community engagement. It will explore the university’s efforts to foster spiritual growth among students and equip them for lives of service and leadership in the Church and the world.

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## **Identity Standard I – Ecclesiastical Mission and Goals**

Concordia University, St. Paul (CSP) embraces a mission that is both Christ-centered and student-focused, a vision that guides the university’s academic and spiritual life. At the heart of this mission is a commitment to integrating faith and learning across all disciplines. The Theology Department, in partnership with other academic programs, develops learning modules that intentionally connect disciplinary content with Christian ethics and a Biblical worldview. Faculty across the university collaborate with the theology faculty to interweave these principles into coursework, ensuring that students see how faith informs both professional practice and everyday life. To strengthen this shared identity, all faculty and staff participate in a Seminar on Lutheran Higher Education during their time at CSP. This experience grounds employees in the university’s mission and equips them to carry out their work with a distinct Lutheran approach. Finally, while each academic program addresses the requirements of a second-party accreditation, CSP is committed to navigating these expectations within the framework of its Biblical worldview. This allows the university to maintain both academic excellence and fidelity to its ecclesiastical mission.

### **Interview Specifics:**

- “It is a great joy to serve the church.”
- The written mission, identity, values and goals statements of CSP are clearly Christ-centered. This is also consistently communicated in interviews. There is strong

administrative buy in that is clearly reflected at all levels. This appears in written materials, in posters and displays around campus as well as what is voiced by students, staff, and faculty.

- Commitment to the Scriptures was evident in faculty discussions beyond theology.
  - CSP is enjoying tremendous momentum in the development of church work programs. They currently have 45 pre-seminary students.
  - The visitation team identified for the administration the laudable goal to seek to have all of the administrative team be members of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.
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## **Identity Standard II – Spiritual and Academic Life**

Concordia University, St. Paul fosters a campus culture that is relationship-driven, Christ-centered, and student-focused, integrating faith and learning in ways that shape both academic and spiritual growth. Students regularly encounter the gospel through classroom experiences, conversations, and worship opportunities, with faculty and staff committed to sharing Christ and modeling lives of faith, service, and vocation. CSP's curriculum provides students with choice in required religion courses, encouraging greater investment in their learning while emphasizing the integration of Christian ethics and Biblical values across all disciplines. Faculty work closely with theology colleagues to intentionally connect faith with ethical and social issues, while retaining the freedom to teach their disciplines fully through the lens of a Biblical worldview.

Worship life is central to CSP's identity, offering a variety of services—morning and evening, diverse in style—tailored to the developmental needs of undergraduates yet always grounded in God's Word. Faculty, staff, students, and visitors alike are invited to participate, and the entire campus community is encouraged to engage in local congregations and community events that extend the university's mission beyond campus.

Faith integration is also evident at the graduate level, where CSP demonstrates its Lutheran identity by placing courses such as ethics at the forefront of doctoral programs. Similarly, undergraduate theology coursework often includes experiential learning, such as visiting multiple congregations to see how ministry looks in different settings. In all aspects of academic and spiritual life, Concordia University, St. Paul equips students to discern their vocation and calling, supports them in achieving their goals, and seeks to be a welcoming community where Christ is proclaimed daily.

### **Interview Specifics:**

- The deans and Vice Provost and Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Kevin Hall, are clearly on board with the mission of CSP, valuing fidelity, service, and care for students under the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. As one said, "It is impossible for a student to get through without hearing of Christ in classes and seeing the faith demonstrated by faculty."
- Chapel attendance has risen significantly over the past 12 years under the leadership of their university pastor, Rev. Tom Gundermann.

- A rostered female ministry associate assists the university pastor in providing spiritual care, especially to female students, as well as administration of the spiritual life programs.
- Lutheran Service Book is utilized in most worship settings, as well as other worship resources which have gone through LCMS doctrinal review.
- The university pastor and ministry associate expressed joy in watching students grow in their life in Christ; both expressed a desire that the campus ministry staffs of CUS schools be brought together for support, encouragement, and best ministry practices; both expressed the need for biblically-based, Lutheran counselors and therapists who can assist those in need to receive the ministry of Law and Gospel.
- The goal was expressed to continue to strengthen campus worship by choosing the best resources available, including appropriate music.
- The team expressed the encouragement to cultivate the involvement of more ordained faculty as well as area LCMS pastors in expanded chapel preaching.
- The university continues to look for ways to respectfully engage Muslim students in hearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Faculty clearly articulated and integrated their understanding of the Lutheran mission and ethos of the university into their conversations with the visitation team.
- CSP's full time faculty intentionally and exclusively consists of Christians. They seek LCMS faculty for open positions but are challenged to find sufficient qualified LCMS candidates. This has resulted in a lower percentage of LCMS faculty, but the administration continues to seek improvement. Staff are dominantly Christian.
- Particularly noteworthy were the programs and faculty in the health sciences department, who integrate the Lutheran worldview at every level, recognizing in a very intentional way that health care has historically been prioritized and carried out by Christian people who view every human being as bearing the image of God, being children of God, and that only through a Christian lens can people truly be cared for in a holistic way.
- Lutheran ethos also showed through the deliberate focus on training health care providers to serve rural and underserved areas of our country.
- Online Bible studies and prayer groups are available and utilized by online students.
- The Center for Biblical Studies (see below) is free to CSP students and staff.
- Athletic faculty and staff are encouraged to find ways to improve chapel attendance among the student athletes.
- All students are required to take two theology classes. The visitation team noted that a required course specifically on Lutheran doctrine would be helpful as part of the core curriculum.
- The visitation team suggested that the administration might work with the theology department to create a "two-track curriculum" for the core courses in theology. One track or entry-level course in which students who have little or no catechesis in biblical studies would enroll and the other track or first-course for students who have a greater foundation.

### **Identity Standard III – Student Recruitment and Student Life**

Concordia University, St. Paul is intentional in creating a vibrant, Christ-centered community where students are welcomed, supported, and encouraged to grow both academically and spiritually. Recruitment efforts reflect this commitment, with scholarships for church work students underscoring CSP's dedication to preparing future leaders for service in the Lutheran church and beyond. Faculty—both on campus and online—prioritize meaningful connections with students. Online faculty, for example, highlight the importance of building strong relationships with distance learners, sometimes even traveling to meet graduate students in person to provide coaching, mentoring, and support.

Student life at CSP reflects the university's mission of faith, service, and leadership. Students report being encouraged to take part in chapel and Bible study, serve as readers in worship, and step into leadership roles across campus. They also participate in mission trips and engage in diverse service opportunities, living out their vocation through acts of compassion and witness. These experiences help students develop a deeper understanding of their faith, cultivate leadership skills, and prepare to serve others in their future professions and communities. In all, CSP's approach to recruitment and student life ensures that learners—whether residential or online—are invited into a welcoming community that fosters academic excellence, spiritual growth, and a lifelong commitment to Christ-centered service.

#### **Interview Specifics:**

- The admissions team is on the front line of CSP and is often first to meet potential students.
- They are fluent in our Lutheran worldview and the joy of living the Gospel and our Lutheran identity.
- They are enthusiastic about the growth of church worker enrollment in recent years.
- They are supportive of the tagline, "Christ Is Honored! All Are Welcome!"
- President Friedrich is very engaged with admissions. He creates a personal video for church work students who enroll and tries to greet potential church work students when they arrive on campus.
- The staff has full support from President Friedrich, stating "Opportunity is not a lengthy visitor."
- The staff encourages spiritual life on campus for all students in chapel, classroom instruction, peer learning, and small group devotions held on campus. This is seen as key to retention.
- The admissions staff works diligently to connect with Lutheran high schools, with the understanding that connections need to be made even earlier in elementary schools.
- Arts programs are connected to the university's mission.
- Music programs prioritize service in worship both on and off campus.
- CSP has an admirable vetting process for all plays which includes significant participation by church work students.

## **Identity Standard IV – Planning and Resourcing**

Concordia University, St. Paul is intentional in aligning its planning and resourcing with its enduring mission and vision. This commitment is consistently communicated to donors and alumni, reinforcing the message that while today's students may look different, CSP remains the same university with the same mission, values, and Christ-centered focus that have guided it for generations. Collaboration across departments is a hallmark of CSP's planning efforts, ensuring that resources are used strategically and always with a focus on students. By working together, faculty, staff, and administrators create a unified approach that sustains academic excellence, supports student success, and strengthens the university's ability to live out its mission.

### **Interview Specifics:**

- CSP has approximately 70 million dollars in endowments, a key to long-term stability. Intentional efforts in development promote gifting toward church work endowments.
- Dr. Eric LaMott and Rev. Dr. Michael Dorner, senior administrative staff, have been in leadership for many years and are committed to the university's mission, which increases the university's stability.
- President Friedrich is commended for his leadership, vision, and commitment to Concordia as a Christ-centered university. "We can do many things, but we cannot do everything." Thus, funding priorities are determined based on what will best serve the university's Christ-centered mission.
- Building and rebuilding faculty is important, but priority is given to the theology faculty which assists in providing leadership for every department of the university.
- Most staff are Christian. Staff routinely go through an eight-week Seminar on Lutheran Higher Education. Staff expressed appreciation for this program and affirmed its helpfulness.

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## **Identity Standard V – Governance, Leadership, and Administration**

Concordia University, St. Paul is guided by leadership that is deeply committed to its Christ-centered mission. President Brian Friedrich is recognized for his faithfulness to this mission, intentionally curating faculty and staff who not only uphold the university's academic standards but also embrace and advance its Christian identity. All employees participate in the eight-week Seminar on Lutheran Higher Education, reinforcing a shared understanding of CSP's theological foundation and values.

From the moment students arrive on campus through graduation, President Friedrich and the university pastor provide consistent faith-centered leadership, ensuring that Christ's presence is woven into the student experience. Administrative teams model this same commitment by grounding their decision-making in prayer and God's Word, while faculty and staff report a culture of collaboration, mutual respect, and shared purpose.

CSP's leaders also "live and breathe the strategic plan," ensuring that long-term goals, daily practices, and resource allocation are aligned with the university's enduring mission. This integration of governance, leadership, and administration creates a unified community dedicated to student success, institutional faithfulness, and the proclamation of the Gospel.

### **Interview Specifics:**

- President Friedrich has a deep knowledge of, and loyalty to the LCMS. His piety is evident (and noted by his campus. One remarked, "We have a president who loves Jesus." That is clear). This sets a strong tone for the entire campus. He is active in chapel, visible in district and synodical contexts, and well-respected leader in the LCMS.
- The chief mission officer is a tremendous asset to the university and Synod, serving with the president to advance the Gospel and the mission of the university. He fully supports the ecclesiastical interests of the Synod and has used his position to equip many individuals and departments to enhance this mission.
- Board members and senior administrative leaders and department heads speak positively about the Synod and recognize their place within it.
- Various offices and departments regularly dialogue with their sister schools in the CUS (e.g., President, Chief Mission Officer, student services, etc.)
- The Center for Biblical Studies is an initiative brought about by the leadership and vision of President Friedrich to engage more deeply with the LCMS. This led to the calling of a renown Old Testament scholar and seasoned pastor, the Rev. Dr. Reed Lessing, prolific author and engaging speaker. The CBS provides 4 conferences a year with between 80 and 100 regular participants. Each year the whole church, especially pastors, is provided Bible studies and sermon series. Of special interest are stewardship resources provided to pastors to build the life of Gospel-motivated financial generosity among God's people. While the conferences are free for CSP staff and students, they provide a door to CSP for the LCMS and among the broader Lutheran community including the WELS. The Center for Biblical Studies works in partnership with Concordia Publishing House and adds value and resources especially to pastors in the field. Laity and commissioned workers of the LCMS are also encouraged to attend and utilize the resources. While a small fee is involved in the conferences, 90% of the budget for the Center is provided by CSP budget, indicating an investment in the church and her Christ-given work.

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### **Identity Standard VI – Assessment of Effectiveness**

The visitation team noted how the self-study report was an accurate portrayal of the university's intentional efforts to assess the effectiveness of the Lutheran identity, mission outcomes, and ecclesiastical goals of the university. Participation with both the informal and formal visitations of CUS teams has honed and sharpened the university's own efforts at self-assessment.

"Internally, CSP conducts regular self-assessments at multiple levels. The Strategic Plan 2030 includes measurable goals tied to Lutheran identity, student formation, and academic quality, with progress monitored annually. The CSP Ministry Plan for Outreach and Evangelism (2025-26) likewise establishes clear objectives for worship, discipleship, and outreach, with annual



metrics, surveys, and reflection sessions used for evaluation and adjustment. Faculty-led assessments of student learning outcomes and program reviews are conducted regularly, as outlined in the Faculty Handbook, with results reported to administration for continuous improvement” (CSP Self-Study Report 2025).

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## **Identity Standard VII – Handling and Resolving Concerns of Constituents**

The visitation team reviewed all policies and procedures for handling and resolving constituent concerns and found them to be clearly defined in the Faculty Policies Handbook and the Student Handbook. No recent legitimate cases of concern have been noted. Student and staff interviews demonstrated a remarkable degree of satisfaction with the university administration and faculty in their willingness to listen to questions and concerns and to address them not only reactively, but proactively and with empathy and respect for those expressing their concerns.

### **Interview Specifics:**

- Led by President Friedrich, the administrative team, deans, and faculty have “a listening ear” toward students and the church-at-large. This was observed in both scheduled student interviews and unplanned interviews.
  - The work of the university pastor has been to bring and model both “grace and truth” to CSP and the diversity of ministry challenges.
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## **Conclusion**

The visitation team gave thanks to God and commended President Friedrich and Concordia University, St. Paul, for its strong commitment to its mission as a Christ-centered Lutheran university, committed to the Christian faith and life as taught in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the Lutheran Confessions. The team was impressed with President Friedrich’s faithful pastoral leadership. CSP has been blessed with a strong sense of community. Lutheran identity is in evidence throughout the university. The level of concord in confession and fraternal Christian love is remarkable. Overall, the visitation team affirmed without concerns CSP’s success in fulfilling its mission and offered constructive suggestions for continued growth.