

Advisory Committee 4, Education and Candidacy, Rev. Christopher deWinter reporting, presents the following:

III. Calvin University

A. Materials

1. Calvin University Report, pp. 239-50
2. Calvin University Supplement

B. Privilege of the Floor

Bruce Los, chair; Greg Elzinga, interim president; Mary Tuuk Kurus, board vice-chair; and Perrin Rynders, chair of the Trustee Committee

C. Recommendation

1. That synod take note of the report from Calvin University with gratitude to God for their ongoing work of “equipping students to think deeply, act justly, and live wholeheartedly as Christ’s agents of renewal.” (Calvin University Report, II, *Agenda for Synod 2024*)
2. That synod take note of the recent announcement from the Board of Trustees of Calvin University on June 13, 2024; which reads, in full, “The Board of Calvin University and Wiebe and Joanna Boer write this joint statement to bring closure to Dr. Boer’s term as President of Calvin University. Out of a shared desire for the future wellbeing of Calvin University and all related individuals, the Board and the Boers have resolved the matter, and the Boers have dropped their legal actions. The parties are grateful for God’s grace and wish each other well.”

V. Dordt University

A. Materials

Dordt University Report, pp. 335-36

B. Recommendation

That synod take note of the report from Dordt University with gratitude to God for their ongoing work “to work effectively toward Christ-centered renewal in all aspects of life.” (Dordt University Report, *Agenda for Synod 2024*)

VI. Institute for Christian Studies

A. Materials

Institute for Christian Studies Report, pp. 337-39

B. Recommendation

That synod take note of the report from Institute for Christian Studies with gratitude to God for their ongoing work of offering “distinctively Christian educational programs to M.A. and Ph.D. graduate students, K-12 teachers

and principals desiring meaningful professional development, and spiritually seeking lifelong learners.” (ICS Report, *Agenda for Synod 2024*)

VII. The King’s University

A. Materials

The King’s University Report, pp. 340-41

B. Recommendation

That synod take note of the report from The King’s University with gratitude to God for their ongoing work of offering “a university degree grounded in the Christian faith.” (King’s University Report, *Agenda for Synod 2024*)

VIII. Kuyper College

A. Materials

Kuyper College Report, pp. 342-44

B. Recommendation

That synod take note of the report from Kuyper College with gratitude to God for their ongoing work “to live faithfully for Jesus Christ in God’s good world.” (Kuyper College Report, *Agenda for Synod 2024*)

IX. Redeemer University

A. Materials

Redeemer University Report, pp. 345-46

B. Recommendation

That synod take note of the report from Redeemer University with gratitude to God for the “mission of Redeemer where, through the power of Christ, minds are renewed, lives are transformed, and the world is redeemed.” (Redeemer University Report, *Agenda for Synod 2024*)

X. Trinity Christian College

A. Materials

Trinity Christian College Report, pp. 347-48

B. Recommendation

That synod take note of the report from Trinity Christian College with gratitude to God for their ongoing work “of seeing students thrive and encounter the love of Christ as they pursue their academic and professional callings.” (Trinity Christian College, *Agenda for Synod 2024*)

XI. Response to Overture 61: (*Deferred from 2023*), Withhold Denominational Funding from Calvin University until Faculty and Staff Adhere to CRCNA Covenantal Standards

A. Materials

Overture 61, pp. 382-83

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 61.

Grounds:

- a. The inclusion of “staff members of Calvin University” in the overture includes people who are not required to submit to the doctrines and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church in the current application of Church Order Article 5 and the Calvin Covenant for Faculty Members.
- b. This overture asks for corrective action (“withhold all denominational funding”) without an accounting for the distinct processes of Calvin University already in place and their commitment to walk in step with the church.

XII. Response to Overture 44: Do Not Allow Calvin University Faculty to Take Exceptions to the Covenant for Faculty Members

A. Materials

Overture 44, pp. 529-31

B. Preamble

Our committee recognizes that a breakdown of trust has occurred between Calvin University and some of our church members, especially around a shared covenant regarding the definition of unchastity in Heidelberg Catechism, Question and Answer 108. This has led to suspicion and polarization.

Our committee also recognizes that synod has led the way in providing Calvin University direction as it pertains to confessional commitment (for example, Synod 2014 received the document “Confessional Commitment and Academic Freedom at Calvin College . . . submitted in response to the instructions of Synods 2011 and 2012, as being faithful to and honoring synod’s own prior work on confessional subscription.” (*Acts of Synod 2014*, p. 542)

Responding to the leading of synod, Calvin University states in The Faculty Handbook, “When the synod of the Christian Reformed Church has issued a formal interpretation of the confessions, that interpretation shall be binding for Calvin University,” (3.5.1.1, 44)

Synod continues to lead the way, allowing the opportunity for Calvin University to manage itself as an institution of the CRCNA.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod take note of Calvin's efforts to be faithful to the Reformed confessions in the context of academic inquiry.

Grounds:

- a. Synod has affirmed Calvin University's understanding of confessional subscription as "faithful to and honoring synod's own prior work on confessional subscription." (*Acts of Synod 2014*, 542)
- b. "Under the authority of synod, the Church assigns authority for the life of the University to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees, in turn, assigns authority within the University's governance system, in which decisions about personnel and confessional interpretation are assigned to the Professional Status Committee (PSC)." (Calvin University Faculty Handbook, 3.5.1.1)
- c. There are considerations of academic freedom and tenure that do not apply in a church setting. "The Faculty member shall be judged only by the confessional standards of CU, and by the professional standards appropriate to his or her role and discipline" (Calvin University Faculty Handbook, 3.5.4)

And yet, synod must lead the way subject to the Word and Spirit.

2. That synod instruct the Calvin Board of Trustees to define the differences in Calvin's use of "confessional difficulties" in relation to the decisions of synod concerning gravamen, and develop language and processes in alignment with those in the CRC in order to build trust in its relationships with CRC churches and report back to Synod 2025 on its progress.

Grounds:

- a. Calvin University has declared "Calvin desires to be robustly confessional..." (Calvin University Supplement, 3). This would provide shared accountability to such a declaration.
 - b. Calvin University recognizes that "authority to make binding judgments about the meaning and implications of the confessions is assigned to synod." (Confessional Commitment and Academic Freedom, 41)
3. That synod consider this to be our answer to Overture 44.