
Faith Integration and Spiritual Formation Guide

for SWU Affiliate Instructors

*The mediocre teacher tells.
The good teacher explains.
The superior teacher demonstrates.
The great teacher inspires.*

- William Arthur Ward -

Thank you for serving as an affiliate instructor with Southern Wesleyan University. You are not only an ambassador for this institution but more importantly an ambassador for Christ, reconciling all to Him (2 Cor 5:21). As such, you have the supreme privilege to share, not only in the academic development in your students, but also in the process of spiritual formation.

The Integration of Faith and Learning

The integration of faith and learning is critical in all of our courses and lives solely in the realm of academics. The core concept of faith integration can best be explained by thinking “Christianly” about the subject matter that you and your students interact with. The course that contains the proper faith integration looks through scriptural eyes at the subject material. More information on faith integration along with some helpful tips can be found at the [SWU Faith and Learning LibGuide](#).

Spiritual Formation

On the other side of the coin is the focus on spiritual formation in the lives of our students. While the academic world, through faith integration, strengthens the mind, elements of spiritual formation contribute to the building and development of a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. At times these overlap but perhaps more often than not, a student merely needs to know of God’s love. You contribute to students’ spiritual journey through praying for, encouraging, resourcing, and believing in them. Leonard Sweet wrote a book, *Nudge: Awakening Each Other to the God Who’s Already There*, which takes the pressure off of feeling like you have to lead someone from zero to salvation at one encounter. Instead he demonstrates how to use each encounter to reveal more of God’s heart to an individual. This is the simple spiritual goal with each interaction with a student.

It is inevitable that the students you are journeying with through your courses will have significant needs arise. These are all opportunities to interact in a redemptive way. Often these students just want someone who understands and will work with them. As such, feel free to minister to them as needed. In those cases when it may involve a rather significant issue, feel

free to create a CARE alert and let the online chaplain know of the situation. Students feel most validated and important when they can get initial care from their instructor and then work hand in hand with the Online Chaplain. Words cannot convey the value of your presence in the lives of your students.

Many times a student may have questions about the character of God, His nature, Biblical concepts, or deep faith questions prior to committing to the way of Christ. Allow students to wrestle with the big issues of life while you intercede on their behalf. God's Holy Spirit is the One who convicts and He will be working in the life of the student in a myriad of ways. Pray for each student as they open themselves more to God's moving and drawing them unto Himself.

Helpful Ideas for Spiritual Development

At Southern Wesleyan University all instructors are highly involved in the spiritual formation of students. Our instructors are the immediate link to students and the most important element in their faith journey. As an instructor, you are responsible for integrating faith components into each course and interaction with students.

Consider the following items:

- Be sure to keep check on the prayer request forums
- Take advantage of discussion boards to push back and challenge students to think more deeply on the elements of faith
- During synchronous sessions with students feel free to pray for request that have been shared in the request forum and also ask for other requests from the students involved in live communication
- Take a chance to send a snail mail greeting card at the end of the semester thanking students for enrolling and/or their participation during the course
- When you communicate with students, especially if it is on the phone, let them know that they are praying for them
- Make use of text capabilities and text encouraging words/prayers to your students
- God allows us to plant and water but He brings the harvest. You may be at the onset of their faith journey or at the end. Be flexible, asking God how best to minister to them while they are seeking Him.
- If a student finds themselves at the point of accepting Jesus Christ as Savior, reference the included materials for walking through that process if you do not feel comfortable without those prompts.
- Be sure to encourage students to take advantage of our spiritual formation/devotional materials and personnel provided for them.
- When a student encounters a life altering situation, faith crisis, family emergency, course difficulty, feel free to create a CARE alert, signaling the Online Chaplain to contact the student in addition to the care that you provide.
- Pray for your students at least once per week
- Ask probing questions in discussion posts

- Keep a check on the prayer request forums
- At least once during your course contact (email, call, text, card in the mail, etc.) a student directly to encourage and/or pray for them directly
- Post an introductory video on Canvas
 - Name
 - Educational experience
 - Fun fact about yourself
 - Encouragement to students/how can they succeed in this course
 - Pray for students and the semester
- Be sure you visit “how to lead a student to Christ” below
- If a student has a prolonged illness, family/friend death, tension during a class, faith crisis, and similar items, let the student know you are going to pass their information along to the Online Chaplain with their permission – we want to avoid a surprise call from the chaplain

Leading a Student through the Plan of Salvation

If you encounter a student who desires to go deeper in their relationship with Christ and wishes to enter into salvation, do not be intimidated. They most likely just need someone to walk them through a simple process of understanding God’s gospel message.

First, share your personal story of receiving Jesus Christ. All people respond well to story which is why Jesus communicated using short parables to make His points. Share what your life was like before you met Christ, how it changed because of Him, and how you live in relationship with Him presently. Feel free to be as transparent as is comfortable. Individuals do not merely want a belief system, they want to know how to connect with God in a real way. Again, no need to feel intimidated, after all, God called us to be “witnesses” and sharing how you have personally experienced Him is just that.

Next, use the steps below as cues in walking someone through the plan of salvation. God knows the hearts of individuals and salvation comes through Jesus Christ’s grace, not through saying all the right “religious” words:

1. Acknowledge that you are separated from God.
 - “for all have sinned and fallen short of God.” Romans 3:23
2. Repent of your former way, living a self-serving life.
 - “now [God] commands all people everywhere to repent.” Acts 17:30
3. Believe that Jesus Christ lived a perfect life and then paid for all of your shortcomings.
 - “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life...” John 3:36
4. Commit to trusting in Jesus Christ in every way.

- If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved”. Romans 10:9
5. Radically pursue a relationship with Jesus Christ through reading His word, prayer, and practicing His presence in daily life. You can have as much of God as you want!
- “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.”
John 15:9

Have the student repeat a prayer similar to this:

“Heavenly Father, I acknowledge that I am a sinner, separated from you. I believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived a perfect life and paid for my shortcomings in His death and resurrection, making a way for me to reach God. Forgive me for not living up to your standard and cleanse me of those wrong actions. Fill me with your presence right now, give me victory over those things that are not of You, and lead me in Your ways. Give me the strength to live for You. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.”

If one of your students accepts Christ, encourage them to share their life changing decision with someone else and please let the Online Chaplain know what has taken place. Continue to encourage those who are new in Christ and know that the chaplain will be following up with a plan of discipleship, continued growth, and spiritual development.

You are our first line of contact with our students which means you are incredibly valuable in the life of the student. Rejoice in such a blessed position and know that you have the full support of the university behind you.