2016-11-01

Pathway: A Gateway to Global Church Education

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ABSTRACT

Pathway: A Gateway to Global Church Education

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Education and learning have ever been at the core of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Throughout its history that now extends nearly one hundred ninety years, the Church has made numerous attempts to provide educational opportunities for its members. Some attempts have failed, and others were met with some success—though limited, to be sure. In hindsight, most of these efforts were simply laying the foundation for something far greater.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the groundwork for global Church education had been laid, and the seeds planted. Beginning with a pilot administered through BYU-Idaho, a program known as “Pathway” grew into a worldwide effort that is successfully providing educational opportunities to individuals distanced from such occasion. The Church-affiliated university also created a robust online program, that coupled with Pathway, was providing a largely affordable, yet high-quality education to Church members and even a few other individuals across the globe.

Not without its barriers, Pathway and the BYU-Idaho online degree program worked to overcome legal and other limitations in order to create and expand a vigorous offering across cultures, time, and space. Recently, these programs have given root to what is now a global education initiative, collaborating a united effort from each institution affiliated with the Church Educational System.

Keywords: CES Global Education Initiative, Pathway, BYU-Idaho, Church Educational System, Latter-day Saint education, internationalization, Seminaries and Institutes, religious education
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks go to each of the many individuals who contributed to the life of this project. I first acknowledge my thesis chair, John Hilton III, who from the beginning has believed in this project and has contributed sources, experienced insight and support at every point of this journey. As a colleague recently said of him, he is a wonderfully rare blend of both intelligence and goodness. Robert Freeman contributed support both as a member of the thesis committee and through his valuable experience gathering personal histories. Scott Esplin, with his wealth of knowledge in Church education and his impeccable writing skills has shared many insights that have also greatly improved the quality of this work.

Also deserving of my gratitude are all who have worked in the past and present to envision, implement, and grow Pathway. Their personal histories and experiences are the backbone of this thesis. Steve Adams and Lynne Landon, as well as J.D. Griffith, Bryan Justesen, Gene Hayes, April Spaulding, Peter Williams and Alan Young have each offered tremendous help by allowing me to interview them, answering my relentless inquiries and providing their review of this work. I also sincerely thank the dozens of others who have worked to make Pathway what it is today. Without their contributions to Pathway, this project would not be possible. Other key individuals at BYU-Idaho who have personally contributed to this thesis are Brad Hales, Betty Oldham and Rob Eaton. Brother Eaton’s personal record-keeping in the early days of Pathway and his own personal research of President Henry B. Eyring’s involvement with the program brought unique insights that have greatly enhanced the quality of this work. I also thank Henry J. Eyring for his kind willingness to contribute his experience with Pathway and for his remarkable work with Clayton Christensen on innovating higher education.
I express my gratitude to President Clark Gilbert and Elder Kim B. Clark who also graciously contributed their personal experiences to this project as both architects and administrators of Pathway from the program’s genesis. My sincere thanks also go to President Henry B. Eyring for reviewing portions of this work and allowing the use of personal comments that have enriched it.

On a personal note, I acknowledge the enduring love and support of my wife, Traci, who has cheerfully and elegantly supported me during every day of this journey. Her encouragement and love have been paramount to me. I also thank my children, Gabe, Olivia, Madeline, and Liam, who constantly remind me of life’s greatest joy, and my parents and siblings who have so willingly supported us along the way. Ultimately, I thank my Father in Heaven for inspiring me to pursue this project and for opening doors that have allowed it in every way to become what it is.
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CHAPTER ONE

WORKING THE SOIL – FOUNDATIONS OF CHURCH EDUCATION

Introduction

Knowledge and education have within them the power to change the world.\(^1\) Education can give new life and untold confidence. It can transform a multi-generational proclivity toward poverty and offer hope to those who live in darkness. Knowledge can ignite innovation, spawn success, and promote peace. Education can also inspire, uplift, and shape human life. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (herein referred to as “the Church”) has maintained a consistent mission to encourage its members to be well-educated. For over one hundred years the Church has ventured to help educate its membership both religiously and secularly. Yet meeting educational needs has become increasingly complex in what has become a global Church.

Efforts to educate the Saints began in the early days of the Restoration and as the Saints trekked across the barren plains of the Mid-west. Church-founded universities and public schools led to a network of academies. Over time the Church divested its interest in most of the academies, while simultaneously working to grow its religious education programs through Seminaries and Institutes. International schools in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Polynesian Islands received an extended focus, but many of these schools eventually saw an end as they filled their purpose for a season. Church Universities however, experienced continued growth throughout the twentieth century. Once enrollment caps were being met at the Church Universities, administrators turned to more innovative tactics to spread education. After years of

effort to develop an effective learning model and an online program, BYU-Idaho played a central role in expanding Church education to the world. Assuming the name “Pathway,” a new initiative took flight that would seek to make a quality, affordable education available to Church members across the globe. This work is an effort to chronicle the history and creation of Pathway from the perspective of its architects and administrators. Beginning in the earliest days of the Church’s history, we will see how the development and progress of Church education has led to a twenty-first-century global Church education initiative.

With the help of recent advances in technology, the Church has found some success in the area of global education. This effort is being recognized by organizations throughout the world. However, what is working for the Church to provide its global membership with high-quality education may prove difficult for other organizations to replicate. Much of the Church’s success has resulted from a University’s effort to “tap into the Church’s international organization, which already has buildings and teachers in place.” The Lord has prepared his people, including specific, faithful leaders who will willingly implement his inspiring instructions that would take an education to the world that was both economically affordable and of first-class quality. Even from the Church’s infancy, a great foundation was being laid, and out of those small things would eventually, in the twenty-first century, proceed that which is great (D&C 64:33).

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The Priority of Learning

Since the beginning of the restoration of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Church educational philosophy has included the injunction to "teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom" (D&C 88:77). In a dualistic effort to both prepare the earth for Jesus Christ’s Second Coming, and even elevate man to the ultimate stature of a God, revelations given to Joseph Smith are lined with admonitions to seek learning: "Seek diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118); "Teach…that ye may be instructed…of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms—that ye may be prepared in all things" (D&C 88:79-80); “The glory of God is intelligence” (D&C 93:26). The idea of seeking learning to emulate the nature and glory of God lobbed the phrase “eternal progression” to the center in the Mormon lexicon in the early twentieth century. Even Latter-day Saint (LDS) worship itself could be seen as a form of education.

Church founder and prophet, Joseph Smith employed these philosophies by establishing schools in towns scattered across the Midwest. Even at the genesis of the LDS Church, education has played a pivotal role in the LDS community. Whenever Latter-day Saint communities were

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5 Bowman, The Mormon People, 168.
organized, among the first institutions to be provided were places of learning. Erected at the center of Latter-day Saint theology is their temple, which is distinguished by the revelation commanding its construction as a “house of learning” (D&C 88:119). In the early days of the Church, an educational institution known as “the School of the Prophets” was created in 1833. This provided education and training for Church leaders and ministers in Ohio and Missouri. Schoolhouses for general elementary education were also established during these primordial days.

When the Saints were driven from Missouri they established the city of Nauvoo on the banks of the Mississippi River. Holding a prominent place in the city charter was a provision for educational institutions. The University of the City of Nauvoo was organized to oversee a system of schools established throughout the city. As the Saints pioneered west, education continued to be a notable part of their lives. Even during this period of isolation and trial after their expulsion from the mid-western states, they valued the education of their children “almost equally essential to their physical existence.” The first school to be established in the Salt Lake Valley was

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9 Bennion, Mormonism and Education, 38.
erected in October, 1847, only three months after the Saints’ arrival. Each community and settlement had a school where the people could be educated and learn to live providently.

Throughout the Salt Lake Valley, the Church established schools designated as “territorial schools.” These schools, though open to people of all faiths, were highly influenced by Mormons seeing that the legislature was largely made up of Latter-day Saints. Fearing that the Mormons would indoctrinate their children with LDS scriptures, people of other denominations established denominational schools that they hoped would also attract Mormon young people. This aggressive effort sought to educate Latter-day Saint youth in secular knowledge while diverting them away from their faith.

Concerned about the increase of what they called “godless education,” Church leaders established a separate system of schools where both religious and secular learning could take place in accordance with gospel principles and LDS scripture. To oversee the system of smaller schools, the Church followed the same general structure and plan of the University of Nauvoo and established the University of Deseret in 1850, which for a time, also contained a theological department. After a few years, the opinion was held by some that a teacher's religious persuasion [and teachings] ought to remain separate" from the secular classroom. Soon

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10 By Study and Also by Faith: One Hundred Years of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2015), 10.


13 Bennion, Mormonism and Education, 33.

14 Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 28 November 1867, quoted in Brett Dowdle, "A New Policy in Church School Work: The Founding of the LDS Supplementary Religious Education
Territorial government took control over the University that would ultimately become known as the University of Utah.

The Church has long maintained the goal of providing education for as many faithful Latter-day Saints as possible. In 1851, the First Presidency confidently informed Church members that, “School houses have been built in most of the wards, both in the city and country. . . and we joyfully anticipate that the time has arrived when our children may be partakers of the blessings of constantly continued schools in their several wards.”15 In February 1860, LDS officials announced in the Deseret News that a new school named the Union Academy would be built in Salt Lake City from general Church funds. The school welcomed students of diversified faiths. Tithing was used to support the school in place of taxes, and the curriculum would follow LDS philosophy of spiritual-temporal education. Though the Church-financed public school was short-lived, it established "a pattern that was followed fifteen years later when Brigham Young Academy was founded."16

**Brigham Young Academy**

On October 16, 1875, Brigham Young established the Brigham Young Academy in Provo, Utah with hopes of reintroducing this new model of education—a forum where faith...
could be taught. When Karl G. Maeser was sent to Provo on April 21, 1876 to run the new Brigham Young Academy, he met the evening prior with Brigham Young to receive instructions for the new school. The prophet's counsel was brief but poignant: "Brother Maeser, you ought not to teach even the alphabet or the multiplication tables without the spirit of God." Young once mentioned in a letter to his son Alfales Young that the Brigham Young Academy was organized that "the children of the Latter-day Saints can receive a good education unmixed with the pernicious, atheistic influences that are found in so many of the higher schools of the country." Maeser further asserted that, "The Brigham Young Academy has been a chosen instrument in the hands of the God of Israel to plant the seed for an educational system that will spread its ramifications throughout the borders of Zion, penetrate with its benign influence every fireside of the Saints, and open to our youth the avenues to all intelligence, knowledge and power, that are necessary for them to attain in the glorious future of the Latter-day work, foretold by the prophets."

**General Church Board of Education**

In 1888, the General Church Board of Education was created with the purpose of coordinating work of the four existing church academies, and also with the intent of establishing similar academies and institutions in Latter-day Saint settlements throughout the west. Six such

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17 Richards, *Called to Teach*, Kindle edition.


academies were established during the first year of the Board’s existence.\textsuperscript{21} There was early concern that universities on the east coast were cutting into the potential student body of the church academies\textsuperscript{22}, however Karl G. Maeser boldly contended that "the time will come, and you will live to see it, I may not, but it will surely come, when the tide will set in from the other way; and they will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south to be educated by the learned in Zion."\textsuperscript{23} Church leaders continued to encourage the prompt creation of stake academies in each stake, “where the principles of our religion may form a part of the teaching of the schools.”\textsuperscript{24} As a result, the Bannock Idaho Stake organized an Academy that would eventually play a foundational role in “reinvent[ing] undergraduate education.”\textsuperscript{25}

Understanding the geographical limitations of Church academies, leaders propelled a movement to establish religious education throughout the region.\textsuperscript{26} The effort provided religious education classes for children from first through ninth grade. Classes were held outside of public school hours, off school grounds and with no cooperation from the public school system. This

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Jacobsen, “A History of Latter-day Saint Church Academies,” 4.
\item \textsuperscript{22} “Normal”, October 21, 1892, 14 in Richards, \textit{Called to Teach}, Kindle edition.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Wilford Woodruff to 32 Stake Presidencies, 8 June 1888, in Clark, \textit{Messages of the First Presidency}, 3:168.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Griffiths, \textit{The Globalization of Latter-day Saint Education}, 39.
\end{itemize}
program eventually merged with the Church’s primary program, though it established a pattern that would be later followed by the Church’s Seminary and Institute program.

**Seminaries and Institutes of Religion**

The seminary program was introduced in 1911 as a form of religious education for high school-aged students. By 1919, it was clear that the seminary program should become “the great agency of the Church for promoting religious education on the high school level,” and seminary buildings began to be constructed adjacent to public high schools where there was a large body of Latter-day Saint youth. In the 1920s, it was decided that the Church-operated academies “were a financial burden.” As a result, leaders sought to divest their interest in the Church academies and transfer them to the local state government. Nearly all academies were successfully transferred with the exceptions of Brigham Young University—the former Brigham Young Academy—and Ricks College—formerly Bannock Stake Academy. Additionally, the Church maintained the Juarez Academy located in an LDS pioneer colony in northern Mexico.

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27 The weekday Religion Class program for younger children was merged with the Church’s Primary program. Until 1980 when a consolidated three-hour Sunday meeting schedule was introduced, the primary program held weekday youth classes. Additional information regarding the Religion Class program and its discontinuation can be found in Brett D. Dowdle, “A New Policy in Church School Work: The Founding of the LDS Supplementary Religious Education Movement, 1890-1930,” Thesis, Brigham Young University, 2011, 60-103.


31 Many of the academies were transitioned into public high schools. A few collegiate academies remained after the transfers were complete, including Brigham Young University and Ricks College. BYU was retained as a valuable teacher-training facility for the Church. A detailed work on the transferring of Church academies to state governments is found in Esplin, “Education in Transition,” 150-218.

32 Information regarding the retention of Ricks College can be found in chapter 2.
This school was retained as it served as the only likely way for these local pioneers to receive an education.

Seeing the success seminary was having at the high school level, Church leaders desired to find a way to provide LDS college students with religious education. J. Wyley Sessions was sent by the First Presidency to “study the situation and tell us what the Church should do for Latter-day Saints attending universities.”\textsuperscript{33} Church Commissioner of Education, Joseph F. Merrill—principal of the Church’s first high school seminary—asserted that a college-age seminary would aim to “enable our young people attending these colleges to make the necessary adjustments between the things they have been taught in the Church and the things they are learning in the university, to enable them to become firmly settled in their faith.”\textsuperscript{34} Church leaders recognized the import of both religious and secular education, though their immediate efforts were focused on providing religious education to balance and supplement the general university education.

The aim of science is the discovery of truth. If religion is true, or rather, if your religious doctrines are true, then real science can never do ought but support these doctrines. For truth can never be in conflict with itself.

Physical science can aid in the teaching of religion because it develops the right attitude of mind, reveals the minuteness and the immensity of creation, and, therefore, the greatness of God, shows the permanence of even gross entities, making a belief in immortality logical, and makes known a universe where law and justice reign supreme.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{33} James Wyley Sessions interview with Marc Sessions, August 12, 1972, Manuscript, LDS Church Archives, MS15866.


Unlike the high school seminary program, these new “Institutes of Religion” demonstrated the possibility of forming a small cohort of LDS students into a faith-affirming community at the university level. This would allow the Institute program to eventually spread worldwide, with buildings constructed or rented adjacent to many institutions of higher learning across the globe. In a sense, it would take religious education to the people wherever they were established, rather than requiring the students to gather in areas of large LDS populations.

When David O. McKay became President of the Church in 1951, Church growth accelerated rapidly into countries in much of the world. With this unprecedented internationalization came the growth of the seminaries and institutes of religion and Church education. President McKay took Church education to the Pacific Islands and even to Chile. He established the Church College of Hawaii (later renamed BYU-Hawaii) to provide education for LDS youth in the South Pacific. President McKay and other Church officials also sought to further expand the Church Educational System by constructing new junior colleges throughout the United States.

As the Church sought to construct two such facilities in California and Arizona, Boyd K. Packer, then serving as assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve, sent a letter to President McKay and his counselors in February 1963 expressing concerns over this decision and making a concerted plea with the General Church Board of Education that they consider the educational needs of the Church globally. He stated, “Should the Church forgo the opportunity to establish junior colleges, no member of the Church need be deprived of the daily rigorous instruction


under Church sponsorship or control.” With confidence in the flourishing Institute program, he continued, “Nor need they be deprived of religious activity and spiritual welfare while living away from home and attending school.” Packer also vigorously argued that due to the large number of junior colleges in those areas, if the Church did not construct these additional junior colleges, no Latter-day Saint in those regions would be bereft of the opportunity to obtain a junior college education. His letter argued that for these particular students, the best thing the Church could do was to offer a form of religious education through the institute program. Packer contended that the cost per student per year at Brigham Young University was $875, “eleven times” the cost of an institute student.³⁸ Petitioning a global perspective of Church education, Packer concluded:

There is another expression far more important than all I have said with regard to this matter. I confess to a deep yearning concern for the underprivileged youth of the Church, particularly those of Lamanite descent, and find myself restlessly hoping that something may be done to provide even a meager education. I have visited Mexico and know something of our school program there. In Mexico illiteracy is on the increase. But we are able to provide a year’s elementary education to these poor youngsters for only $100.

Somehow to commit hundreds of millions of dollars to provide the well-privileged youth of the Church with an education they will achieve anyway with less expense and more convenience than if we provide it seems unfortunate stewardship of our educational resources.

Is it an error to suggest that the testimony of the Book of Mormon for these underprivileged children in Latin America and elsewhere is predicated upon their ability at least to read?³⁹

³⁸ Ernest L. Wilkinson, then President of BYU, contended that although the education of a BYU student was approximately $875 per year, a junior college education could be furnished for around $500 (Memorandum of Conference of Ernest L. Wilkinson with President David O. McKay, March 11, 1963 in the David O. McKay Diary, March 11, 1963, Box 52 Folder 5, McKay Papers, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah).

³⁹ Boyd K. Packer letter to David O. McKay, Salt Lake City, February 18, 1963 in David O. McKay Diary, March 5, 1963, Box 52 Folder 5, McKay Papers, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah.
Consideration was given to Packer’s concerns and the Executive Committee of the Church Board of Education unanimously concluded that committing the Church to an expanded junior college program would eventually preclude bringing educational opportunities to members of the Church residing in other areas of the world.\(^{40}\) This concern for a global Church membership would be expressed by many, again and again, in the decades that followed.

At the time of Packer’s letter, the Church had already opened thirteen elementary schools in Mexico, with another fourteen in the planning stages. In November of that same year, the Church broke ground on what was to be the central campus of all Church schools in Mexico—the Centro Escolar Benemérito de las Americas. At its ground breaking ceremony, Elder Marion G. Romney prophesied that this center of learning would become a “Spanish language center” whose influence would reach across the continent. He continued by saying that those who attend there would be prepared for a better future on this earth and in the life to come. They would be “taught not only in world knowledge,” but “will learn of the life before and the spiritual virtues that prepare us for the life to come.”\(^{41}\)

It was decided that an effort be made to explore the potential of the Institutes of Religion to achieve Church educational objectives, and that BYU be encouraged to prepare teachers to fill the Seminary and Institute instructor positions.\(^{42}\) At this time it was also decided that a

\(^{40}\) Executive Committee of Church Board of Education, Meeting Minutes, in David O. McKay Diary, March 5, 1963, Box 52 Folder 5, McKay Papers, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah; David O. McKay also included in his diary on March 5, 1963 that he was “thinking of the thousands of our people in foreign countries who need the opportunity for education, and where our money for education could be more profitably spent in furthering the kingdom.”


\(^{42}\) Executive Committee of Church Board of Education, Meeting Minutes, in David O. McKay Diary, March 5, 1963, Box 52 Folder 5, McKay Papers, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah.
“Chancellor” be placed to oversee both BYU and the Seminary and Institute program. Looking to further expand global church educational opportunities, the Church authorized a study with the intent of considering individual needs in countries where the Church was established. Resulting from this study was the conclusion that there was no need for junior colleges in places such as Europe because of their American nature and lack of application in the European educational culture. Further conclusions stated that international expansion of Church education should be considered only after careful study of the purpose of Church education and opportunities available to Church members. At the time, and with the exception of areas where the Church was already working to enhance secular education, elementary, secondary and post-high school education was available to all Church members who could qualify to attend.43 Although Latter-day Saint scripture was clear in the injunction to increase in both secular and spiritual knowledge, the recommendation at the time was that the obligation of the Church was to provide spiritual education rather than secular.44 Congruently, the recommendation was made for the Church to expand the Seminary and Institute program to all countries, as a groundwork for religious education that would reach every member.45

43 J. Elliot Cameron, “A Survey of Basic Educational Opportunities Available to Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” PhD Dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1966, 188-189. A full report of the Church-authorized study, “Church Educational System survey of basic education needs, 1965” is located in the Church History Library in Salt Lake City, CR 102 34. Areas where it was recommended that the Church provide educational opportunities included Mexico, Central America, South American countries, Korea, Hong Kong, and many Pacific Islands.

44 J. Elliot Cameron, “A Survey of Basic Educational Opportunities,” 1072, quoted in Griffiths, “Globalization of Latter-day Saint Education,” 156. Although the decision had been made to focus on global religious education rather than secular education, Paul H. Dunn, a General Authority and a member of the Church Board of Education, worried openly in a meeting of the Church Board and asked, “what could be done for students who are not attending BYU – the impression prevailed throughout the Church that they were not first class citizens.” (See Confidential Memorandum, October 5, 1966, Box 271, Fd. 7, Wilkinson Papers, BYU in Griffiths, “Globalization of Latter-day Saint Education,” 137n32).

Finding the right vehicle in which to expand Church education internationally proved a difficult task. The Church lacked concentration of students in similar areas in order to make the seminary and institute program function beneficially. A home-study program was introduced and eventually expanded to England, Australia, and New Zealand.46 One of the conflicts this program discovered in the form of a “public relations challenge” was that in order to rally sufficient support of the program, program coordinators would need to spend far too much time converting the local leaders to the ideas of seminary.47 This lesson would be learned once again forty years later. Waiting for interest to be expressed from local Church leaders, as well as placing program ownership and oversight under priesthood keys was something that proved difficult for them.48

The year 1970 saw a shift in Church education when President David O. McKay passed away and Ernest Wilkinson—formally head of the Unified Church school system—or CES—and president of BYU—resigned due to failing health. McKay’s successor, Joseph Fielding Smith called Neal A. Maxwell—Vice President of the University of Utah—as Church Commissioner of Education with oversight of the entire Church Educational System.49 Maxwell appointed Dallin H. Oaks as president of BYU, and Henry B. Eyring as president of Ricks College. Maxwell also created and received approval for the new organization of the Church Educational System,

46 See Donald Wilson, History of the Latter-day Saint Home Study Program, MS 4941, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
48 Delbert L. Stapley to Gordon B. Hinckley, Dec. 11, 1964, Salt Lake City, CR 102 125, Church Educational System Administrative Files, Box 10, Folder 8, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, in Griffiths, “Globalization of Church Education,” 166.
49 Maxwell’s office in the new Church Office Building in downtown Salt Lake City separated his role symbolically from any one of the Church’s secular educational institutions.
giving each of the Church schools equal access to the Church Board of Education.\textsuperscript{50} Though efforts were sought by some for BYU to expand secular learning domestically, Maxwell maintained a priority instead on religious education by expanding the Seminary and Institute program internationally. He stated, “We felt seminaries and institutes could follow the Church wherever it went, whereas you couldn’t fund additional schools and universities and colleges.”\textsuperscript{51} Within a few months, the Church Board of Education decided to offer seminary and institute programs to Church members wherever the Church was established.

In conjunction with the burgeoning global expansion of religious education, a new policy was introduced in 1971 governing Church primary and secondary schools. This Commissioner’s Report titled “Seek Learning Even by Study and Faith,” established a three-fold focus for Church education: 1) Literacy and basic education are gospel needs; 2) Church programs will not duplicate otherwise available opportunities especially in higher education; 3) Ultimately all high school and college-age Latter-day Saints should have access to weekday religious education, in tandem with secular education. Goals were also defined to develop in Church members firm testimonies of the divinity of Jesus Christ and His restored Gospel, local Church leadership, parental effectiveness and stability in the home, community leadership, job competence, work skills, industriousness, confidence, creativity and the ability to effectively solve problems.\textsuperscript{52} The report also stated that religious education would have primary emphasis in the future expansion

\textsuperscript{50} Previous to the new organization of the Church Educational System, Ernest Wilkinson served both as president of Brigham Young University and as head of the Unified Church School System.


\textsuperscript{52} Seek Learning Even by Study and Faith: Report for 1971 from Commissioner of Education of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, M260 S451 1971, Church History Library, 1.
of the Church Educational System, and that it would draw on the spirit of volunteerism as it sought further global expansion.

Jeffrey R. Holland—formerly the dean of Religious Education at BYU—was called as Commissioner of Church Education in 1976. Under the leadership of both he and Maxwell, CES gradually phased out many of the international Church schools in favor of seminaries and institutes. With seventy-five international schools during the mid-1970s, the program was eventually reduced to fourteen by the year 2016.53 Synchronous to the phasing out of primary and secondary schools, religious education successfully spread across the globe. In just five years CES programs had expanded to dozens of nations, and by the end of the 1970s, CES programs existed in 66 countries and in 17 languages. Henry B. Eyring, serving as Church Commissioner of Education from 1980 to 1985, worked with Church leadership for global expansion of Church education. He recorded in his journal a valuable lesson he learned from Elder Boyd K. Packer regarding international Church growth. He learned that “treating every member of the Church equally means meeting his needs in a way appropriate to his or her needs and country, not imposing the same chapel designs, the same organization structures, or the same programs on everyone everywhere. Giving a member in Peru what is preferred on the Wasatch Front can be giving him less than giving him a simpler building and program suited to him. And it can cost a lot more.”54 This lesson would serve him much in the coming years as he would

53 By Study and Also by Faith: One Hundred Years of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2015), 229; Most of these schools were closed in the 1970s and 1980s, with the last closure taking place in 2013 when Benemérito de las Americas was converted to the new Mexico Missionary Training Center—a ripple effect of the change in age eligibility for missionaries.

continue to become a leading figure in the expansion of Church education into the twenty-first century.

Expansion continued with programs opening in 19 countries during the 1980s, and an additional 62 countries during the 1990s. As of Summer 2016, seminary and institute programs are accessible to students in 155 countries through stake and district-based seminary classes—either daily classes or online or home-study courses—and released-time seminary. For young adults, institute programs have also been established worldwide for those 18-30 years of age.

Expansion of Secular Educational Opportunities

In addition to the Church’s global effort to provide religious education, in 1995, the Executive Committee of the Church Board of Education proposed that the Board provide three pilot learning centers for young adults. These Educational Outreach Centers would use existing Church facilities and would be a collaborated effort of Church welfare services, local Institute of Religion programs, BYU Continuing Education, local meetinghouses and local businesses. The outreach centers would offer instruction, social opportunities, educational, career and employment advisement, as well as credit and non-credit classes for academic and employment preparation. Other offerings would also include English as a second language, and personal resource management courses. These centers relied on CES personnel in addition to volunteers and missionaries. The vision of these centers included offering associate and selected baccalaureate degrees. When the board approved the pilots they advised that CES faculty should not become overly involved in the presentation or supervision of this program, but rather focus


56 Selections from the Executive Committee and Church Board of Education Minutes 1990-June 2001, May 18, 1995 in By Study and Also by Faith, 410.
on their religious education responsibilities. In 1997, Elder Merrill J. Bateman, then serving as a member of the Seventy and president of BYU, proposed international pilots for this outreach program. Pilots were selected in Mexico and Brazil, where program offerings were considered to be highly beneficial.

Maintaining the program under priesthood keys seemed a priority and a counselor of the area presidency chaired a local administrative council that also consisted of an agent stake president, Church Welfare, CES, and representatives from the Presiding Bishopric’s Office who carried out the program’s employment functions. The programs seemed to function well and as a result, institute enrollment at the pilot sites increased. The outreach sites saw successful collaboration between CES, Welfare, and priesthood leaders, however, recommended program expansion would require more money, volunteers and personnel. The model was that the University would expand itself by using Church buildings in a sense that the Church would serve the University. Despite the program’s apparent success, the Church Board of Education suspended the pilot and recommended no further action on them for the time.

As technology advanced, BYU Independent Study began offering courses online, including high school courses. BYU-Hawaii also became involved in online learning. Their endeavors included experimenting with innovative ways to connect students through online videos.

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57 Selections from the Minutes 1990-June 2001, April 22, 1998 in By Study and Also by Faith, 412-413.

58 Selections from the Minutes 1990-June 2001, June 9, 1999 in By Study and Also by Faith, 413.
The Perpetual Education Fund

In April 2001, President Gordon B. Hinckley announced the Perpetual Education Fund (PEF) to help young adults in developing areas rise out of poverty. The fund loaned money to international members of the Church who were attending a local Institute of Religion. These loans assisted them in obtaining an education, with the expectation that their loan would be repaid with minimal interest in order to fund subsequent student loans.\(^{59}\) By 2012, PEF had served over 50,000 members. The fund proved successful in its focus, but not without sacrifice. In order to administer the program, Seminary and Institute (S&I) personnel including institute directors, coordinators, and support staff added between 5 to 25 hours to their weekly workload.\(^{60}\) This uncompensated burden to S&I employees was a significant contribution to the beginning stages of PEF. Administrators of both PEF and S&I repeatedly discussed the issue of commitment coming from S&I employees at the cost of some of their principal responsibilities. Eventually in 2012, a recommendation was approved to place administration of PEF under the Church’s Welfare Department to relieve burdens placed on S&I.

Though many attempts were made in the twentieth century to globally expand Church education making it available to all members, only the direct extension of religious education was successful. Initiatives to take secular education to all Church members were rooted in the doctrine of learning, however they lacked the necessary instruments, funding and articulate vision to breed success. The seeds that would eventually germinate to more effectively achieve

\(^{59}\) PEF came decades after the International Education Fund, which was established in 1978 by the Board of Education to provide scholarships, loans and grants to help students pursue education in their country. Funded by operating budget and private contributions, very few of these loans were ever repaid.

\(^{60}\) By Study and Also by Faith, 557.
that objective had been planted however, more than one hundred years ago in the cultivated soil of Rexburg, Idaho.
Bannock Stake Academy Becomes Ricks College

On November 12, 1888, President Thomas E. Ricks of the Bannock Idaho Stake and Karl G. Maeser of the General Church Board of Education opened the Bannock Stake Academy at Rexburg, Idaho. Maeser, who was Superintendent of Church schools “promised them that their new school should one day be a great educational institution.”¹ Present at its opening were eight individuals who served on the school’s board of education, three teachers and fifty students from age six to early twenties. Jacob Spori was appointed to be the academy’s first principal and was among those present at the grand opening and said the new academy “was to give spirituality precedence over worldliness.” He also stated that “the seeds we are planting today will grow and become mighty oaks, and their branches will run all over the earth.”²

In its first year, tuition for the first ten weeks was $2 for primary grade, $3 for prep grade and $4 for intermediate grade.³ Many of the older students had much of a previous education and the intermediate group proved particularly difficult to grade. Spori was “often at his wits end to know how to handle them with their variations in training, experience, and department.”⁴ The Academy saw numerous name changes when in 1902 it took on the name “Ricks” in honor of

¹ Hyrum Manwaring, “Ricks College: A History of Fifty-six Years 1888-1944,” 1952, M266.2 R539ma, Church History Library; See also Joyce May, “Ricks College: Idaho’s Latter-day Saint School,” Improvement Era, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), Vol. 52 No. 10, October 1951, 710. May states that at the opening of Bannock Stake Academy Karl Maeser “pronounced a wonderful blessing on the school and on those who should teach there in the future.”


³ Manwaring, “Ricks College: A History of Fifty-Six Years.”

⁴ Manwaring, “Ricks College: A History of Fifty-Six Years.”
Thomas E. Ricks—a revered pioneer settler in the area—and then in 1923 when it was named “Ricks College.” In his book on the history of Ricks College, and speaking of the establishment of Ricks Academy, David Crowder said:

The academy lifts high its head among the educational institutions of this western country…. No words can express, no tongue can tell the high destiny that awaits it in the future…. Nothing can now stand in the way of its future progress, even the most optimistic cannot today realize its high destiny. It will shine as a beacon light to the ends of the earth, and add to the beauty and glory of Zion through all the coming years. Its praises will be sung in every land and thousands will drink from it as from a living fountain and thirst no more.⁵

The 1914 Christmas edition of the Current-Journal—a Rexburg Newspaper—also spoke of the school’s future growth and contended that, “The Ricks Academy is destined to grow to a large and influential school.”⁶ The school’s pioneering blood has given life to the body of the institution. In 1920, the College received national attention for its ability to tailor-fit its offerings to the unique needs of its students living in an agricultural community, being recognized for its “fascinating story of enterprise, progress, and original endeavor.”⁷

During the 1923-1924 school year, a department of Business was added to the college curriculum, and the first two years of high school curriculum were eliminated. The college became a four-year institution—two years of high school and two years of college. This proceeded until 1932 when the school offered only a junior college education.⁸ In the midst of the great depression, funding of Church schools became difficult and the Church Board of Education announced plans to turn Ricks College over to the State of Idaho. Four times the

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⁸ Manwaring, “Ricks College: A History of Fifty-Six Years.”
Church introduced legislature to transfer Ricks to the State, and four times the legislation was defeated. In his fifty-six-year history of the College, then president, Hyrum Manwaring wrote, “The school did not seem to belong to anyone, or to have a place in educational circles. The church did not want it, the state would not have it, and the district board did not know what to do with it. The president and faculty just went ahead and ran it the best they could with their very limited budget and the trying conditions of the financial depression.”9 Regardless of the grim news of an imminent closure, the college president and faculty never gave up the idea that the school would be perpetuated and eventually “fulfill the mission for which it was established.”10

During the Church’s April 1940 General Conference, 230 singers from Ricks College were invited to participate as the visiting choir. After singing, they received hundreds of compliments from General Authorities and listeners from all over the Church. Manwaring said of this occasion: “This was a great achievement for the college, and helped greatly to stimulate the growing sentiment that Ricks College remain a church school. Church president David O. McKay and several others of the general board said: ‘Don’t ever offer Ricks College to the state of Idaho again.’ This was the beginning of a new era in Ricks College history. From this point the sentiment grew rapidly that Ricks should forever remain a church school, and be definitely perpetuated.” Manwaring went on to say that, “many feel that the dangers of the past are over, and that Ricks College will now live to fulfill the prophetic promises made for it at its founding.”11

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10 Manwaring, “Ricks College: A History of Fifty-Six Years.”

11 Manwaring, “Ricks College: A History of Fifty-Six Years.”
The school had become fully accredited in 1936, and with its roots planted in Rexburg, its future was looking bright. The First Presidency sent a letter to local stake presidents and bishops announcing that Ricks College would be a permanent part of the Church Educational System and would be built into a first-class junior college. A few years later the Church Board of Education announced that Ricks College would become a four-year college, offering 100 new courses and sixteen bachelor’s degrees. Accreditation of the four-year programs was awarded in 1951. Then without much explanation, stating simply that the change would further Ricks’ important role in the Unified Church School System, in 1955 the Church Board of Education announced the decision to revert Ricks College back into a two-year junior college.

During the 1950s, controversy existed about whether to leave Ricks in Rexburg or to move it to Idaho Falls. A study of the discord reveals a contest with Ernest Wilkinson—administrator of the Unified Church School System—on one side, and the people of Rexburg on the other. Wilkinson asserted that all relative, quantitative data—what he considered the only information pertinent to the decision—favored the school’s transfer to Idaho Falls. Notwithstanding, McKay had never felt comfortable with the decision and had already given his word to the residents of Rexburg that the college would remain in their town. Following

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14 Letter from First Presidency, April 7, 1955 in Crowder, *The Spirit of Ricks*, chapter 11. Online version, url: [http://www.byui.edu/special-collections/collection-areas/campus-history/history-of-ricks/chapter-11](http://www.byui.edu/special-collections/collection-areas/campus-history/history-of-ricks/chapter-11), accessed June 21, 2016. The letter stated that the First Presidency and Board of Education had “come to the conclusion that Ricks College will be of more service to the church, and have a greater destiny as an integral and permanent part of the church school system by being a first class junior college than by continuing as a relatively small four-year college.”
multiple reversals of their decision, the First Presidency ultimately chose to keep Ricks College in Rexburg. In a crow of his own propriety over the issue, Wilkinson noted in his personal diary, “This will mean that Ricks College at Rexburg will continue as a relatively small school.”

Campus grew during the 1960s with the addition of about a dozen new buildings, and during this decade the college tripled in size. At the eightieth anniversary of Ricks College in 1968 the theme song for the homecoming pageant was taken from the winning poem of a poetry contest. Entitled “The Light on the Hill,” a few verses from the poem read:

There’s a beacon flaming skyward
Beckoning to those who seek
Signifying man’s reach upward
From his station, low and meek.
*Ricks will light the wanderer’s pathway*
To a greater destiny.
Ricks will show the way to freedom
Through true wisdom’s secret key.

It’s an ever-constant beacon
Lighting torches in the hearts
Of the children of our Father
As they yearn to do their parts
*In the building of His kingdom*
Both on earth and up above;

This homecoming song would become prophetic, though in a way few would realize it until forty years in the future.

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15 David O. McKay Diary, McKay Diary, June 30, 1960, Box 45, McKay Papers, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah.


From Henry B. Eyring to David A. Bednar

In July 1971, Henry B. Eyring was named as the tenth president of Ricks College. Reflecting on his arrival at Ricks, Eyring recalled that “I was in a place unlike anything I had ever seen before, and if I had an impression come over me, it was ‘forget everything you think you know, just don’t change this place much.’” 19 Eyring discovered that the “Spirit of Ricks” included a group of teachers who cared about individual students in a way he never thought possible. In his inaugural response Eyring espoused the idea of Ricks College reaching far beyond the campus in Rexburg. He stated, “We must also find ways for this college to serve young people whose needs are shaped by a great variety of cultures and situations, and who may not be able to come to this campus. We will find direct ways to move the blessing of education... from this campus out into the lives of men and women everywhere.” 20

Under Eyring’s leadership the college continued to increase its physical presence with roots firmly planted in Rexburg. Staying close to its pioneer roots was something Eyring felt was necessary in order for the school to fulfill its divine purpose. He reflected on the impressions he had as president of Ricks by saying, “they were only subtle impressions—feelings that this was a special place that needed to keep its spiritual standards high while staying close to its roots. I particularly felt the need to maintain our pioneer frugality.” 21 Dealing with the wake of a large local disaster during 1976 22, Eyring recalls that he saw then the type of people who have always

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21 Ibid.

22 In 1976, the Teton Dam, located 19 miles Northeast of Rexburg, Idaho, collapsed and caused major flooding in the area. Damage was estimated at $2 billion and it is said to have been “one of the largest engineering
supported Ricks College, and the type of people produced by Ricks College—people who under terrible pressure valiantly, in complete self-sacrifice, deal with what has to be dealt with. The faculty were also well prepared to teach and had one of the highest ratio of PhDs in any two-year school.

The school maintained a focus on being divinely led in its mission and operations. A reminder of this priority was given by Church president Ezra Taft Benson when he dedicated nine buildings on campus in April, 1976. The two-year junior college continued to grow and enrollment increased by 20% to six thousand students during Eyring’s presidency. By its centennial year in 1988, 7,694 students were enrolled representing 49 states, 36 foreign nations, and 12 religious affiliations. This enrollment mark exceeded the 7,500 cap, causing administrators to seek ways to decrease enrollment in 1989. Enrollment continued to exceed the cap until 1997 when the enrollment ceiling was removed.

Focused on admitting as many students as possible, a fast-track program was developed in 1997 encouraging students to take advanced placement courses during high school so that an associate’s degree could be obtained after only one year on campus. Admission limits now depended only according to campus space that would allow for about 8,250 students in 1997 and

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23 Eyring, H.B., BYU-Idaho: On a Steady Upward Course.


possibly reach 9,000. At a commencement address in 1997, Henry B. Eyring, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, reflected that Ricks College “has grown in its power to accelerate learning beyond anything I foresaw…. There is a greater faith among those who come here that there are, with the help of God, no limits to our growth.”

On July 1, 1997, David A. Bednar became the fourteenth president of Ricks College. Bednar’s background in management and decision-making would become more vital to the evolution of the College than he or anyone could have guessed. He quickly began requesting recommendations from the faculty to rewrite the school’s key goals and mission, with particular consideration to serve more students at an affordable cost. During his presidency the school continued the spirit of innovation and also continued to experience great change.

**Becoming BYU-Idaho**

Beginning his service at what had become the largest private two-year college in the U.S., Bednar was visited that September by President James E. Faust and Elder Henry B. Eyring members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, respectively. They were to dedicate the new John Taylor Building. Having just returned from a trip to South America, Eyring—serving his second stint as Commissioner of Church Education—accompanied Bednar on a brief

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28 Bruce Hafen, Joe Christensen, and Steve Bennion served as the 11th, 12th and 13th presidents of BYU-Idaho and each made contributions that no doubt assisted in laying a foundation for BYU-Idaho’s involvement in global education. This paper places more emphasis on the administrations of David Bednar and Henry Eyring because of their direct quotes acknowledging a vision of BYU-Idaho’s role in taking education beyond the borders of Rexburg. Eyring’s later role as a member of the Executive Committee of the Church Board of Education also allowed him continued direct involvement with Pathway’s creation and implementation. The focus on Bednar’s administration is also tied to his key role in administering BYU-Idaho’s expansion into a four-year university.

walk-through of the Taylor Building. Standing beneath the vaulted ceilings of the Taylor Chapel, Elder Eyring surveyed the seating area for several minutes. Curious to know his thoughts, President Bednar inquired, “Elder Eyring, what are you thinking about?” Eyring’s response was both “profound and penetrating”: “I am thinking about how much we do for so few and how little we do for so many. The tithing of the people I just visited in South America and from good people all over the world paid for this facility. And most of the people who have made this beautiful facility possible will never see or step foot in a building like this.” These words left an indelible impression on Bednar that influenced his entire presidency.\(^{\text{30}}\) The impact of that statement was felt in his inaugural response. In it, Bednar stated that:

> All worthy youth of the Church deserve a [BYU–Idaho] experience, yet an increasingly smaller percentage of them will ever have that opportunity…. It will be necessary for us at [BYU–Idaho] to serve ever better the thousands of students we have on campus while simultaneously reaching out to bless the lives of tens of thousands of young Latter-day Saints throughout the world. We must learn how to assist and bless institute students and other LDS youth in Rhode Island and Rome while effectively serving our students on campus in Rexburg.\(^{\text{31}}\)

Bednar challenged the faculty to change their paradigm and consider how the school might serve 50,000 students globally and impact the entire global Church membership.\(^{\text{32}}\)

Early in 2000, after a meeting of the board, Church President Gordon B. Hinckley invited Henry B. Eyring to his office and asked, “Hal, couldn’t we serve more students at a lower cost by making Ricks a university?”\(^{\text{33}}\) Furthering the possibility of realizing this vision, a groundbreaking announcement came to the Rexburg campus on June 21, 2000:

\(^{\text{30}}\) David A. Bednar, “Repeat Over Again…the Same Things as Before,” BYU-Idaho Devotional, Rexburg, Idaho, January 26, 2016.


\(^{\text{32}}\) Worrell, History of Ricks College, in Christensen and Eyring, The Innovative University, 225.

\(^{\text{33}}\) Christensen and Eyring, The Innovative University, 231.
The First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Board of Trustees of Ricks College announce that Ricks College will change from its present two-year junior college status to a four-year institution. The new four-year school will be known as Brigham Young University–Idaho, with the name change designed to give the school immediate national and international recognition....

The school will have a unique role in and be distinctive from the other institutions of higher education within the Church Educational System....

BYU-Idaho will operate on an expanded year-round basis, incorporating innovative calendaring and scheduling while also taking advantage of advancements in technology which will enable the four-year institution to serve more students.34

By 2004, over 130 Ricks College associate degree programs would convert to BYU-Idaho’s 18 associate programs and 49 bachelor’s degree programs. Campus faculty increased by 100, and about a dozen buildings were constructed or renovated. By the end of Bednar’s presidency during fall Semester 2004—when he was called to join the Quorum of the Twelve—enrollment had increased from 8,840 FTE during winter 2000 to 10,767 FTE.35 With the new three-track system, the number of students being served had increased from 14,874 in 2000 to over 17,000 students in 2004.36

Bednar’s presidency oversaw a “pivotal time in an essential work.”37 With “immediate national and international recognition” the small frontier academy would now become a “first-class” university. A school that had repetitively “teetered on the edge of oblivion only to be

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35 “FTE” is the full-time equivalent—a sum of all student credit hours, divided by the standard load of a full-time student. The actual number of students enrolled is higher, however not all are enrolled as full-time students. Using the FTE standardizes the statistics to the equivalent number of full-time students.


pulled back time and again by the sacrifice and determination of those who loved her so well,”
now with roots planted firmly, would grow in strength and become increasingly recognized
throughout the world, and it would never fail.\textsuperscript{38} The brief announcement introducing BYU-Idaho
redefined the school and from that moment this remote, rural campus would begin a process of
becoming “world famous.”\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{38} Michael R. Orme, “Vision, Faith and Work: Form Wagonbox to University,” BYU-Idaho Devotional,

\textsuperscript{39} Eyring, H.B., “BYU-Idaho: On a Steady Upward Course.”
CHAPTER THREE
CONTINUOUS GROWTH – “RETHINKING EDUCATION”

Kim B. Clark’s Vision

“What we’re doing here is a new model for education.”¹ This statement came from Kim B. Clark soon after his inauguration as successor to David A. Bednar. Kim Clark had been serving for the last ten years as the Dean of the Harvard Business School. He left that prestigious position after an unexpected invitation from President Gordon B. Hinckley to become president of BYU-Idaho. In an interview with Charlie Rose on his last day at Harvard, Clark stated with some vigor, “We are going to reinvent undergraduate education out there. We're going to have a great time.” He continued, “I get a chance to really think about creating the future because I am going into an environment where we are going to take on undergraduate education and do some new things.”² Clark’s “laser focus” was on preparing young people through undergraduate education. This focus would be realized through “innovation and change and growth, and doing it at a breathtaking pace.”³

Clark’s presidency began at a time when universities across the country were confronting strategic and financial opposition, and the need for higher education was becoming more important in order to obtain good jobs. The U.S. Secretary of Education stated that “ninety percent of the fastest growing jobs will require at least some further education after high school. It’s also estimated that by 2012, over forty percent of factory jobs will require higher


² Kim B. Clark, Interview with Charlie Rose, July 29, 2005.

³ Clark in Moore, “BYU-Idaho President Intent on Rethinking Education.”
education.”4 Looking to the future and at the need for change, one scholar stated that “different, vibrant universities could be built out of existing institutions and that they would have important functions to play.”5

In his inaugural response, Kim B. Clark spoke of a student-focused university drawing on the words of Henry B. Eyring:

“They will be natural leaders who know how to teach and how to learn. They will have the power to innovate and improve without requiring more of what money can buy. Those graduates of BYU-Idaho will become—and this is a prophesy that I am prepared to make and make solemnly—those graduates of BYU-Idaho will become legendary for their capacity to build the people around them and to add value wherever they serve.”6

Clark asserted that the mission of BYU-Idaho was to help its students become “disciple leaders.” He stated, “As we pursue that mission in the years ahead, I believe there are three great imperatives before us.” Those imperative were: 1) To raise substantially the quality of every aspect of the experience our students have—inellctually, personally, and socially. 2) To make a BYU-Idaho education available to many more of the young people of the Church—“following a mandate from the Board to open our doors and grow” and 3) To lower the relative cost of education per student.7


The year of Clark’s inauguration, the U.S. Department of Education established a bipartisan Commission on the Future of Higher Education. The commission’s final report in 2006 stated that, “U.S. higher education needs to improve in dramatic ways.” They urged the creation of a system based on performance rather than reputation, and encouraged access, affordability, higher quality and innovation—the same three imperatives announced by Kim Clark the year before.8 This tripartite focus was not new. The Ricks College Board-approved philanthropic goals for 2000-2005 similarly included emphases to “expand the doors of educational opportunity for deserving and needy students, to enhance the learning environment, and to extend the influence of Ricks College and prepare for future opportunities.”9

Clark acknowledged the need for innovation: “Higher education nationwide is on an unsustainable course...we can’t follow them. We have to go to a new area that nobody else has gone because as they continue to go down that course, that train wreck is assured.”10 BYU-Idaho had taken action to lower relative costs, including three-track admissions, encouraging eight-semester graduates, cheaper textbook options, and placing a 120-credit limit on majors.11 Now it faced the challenge to create “even more powerful and effective learning experiences in which students learn by faith. We want learning that engenders leadership in the way of inspiring

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9 Poulter, “Ricks College Becomes BYU-Idaho,” 43. The need to expand opportunities was mentioned by David A. Bednar: “Approximately 100,000 LDS seniors graduated from high schools in North America last spring—and less than 10,000 can be admitted to a church college or university. Consequently, many worthy and capable young men and women were denied admission to Ricks and BYU.” (David A. Bednar, “In the Path of Their Duty,” Ricks College Devotional September 1, 1998).

10 Poulter, “Ricks College Becomes Brigham Young University-Idaho,” 62.

11 BYU-Idaho offered to pay graduates $500 if they could complete their course work and graduate in eight semesters. This encouraged students to focus on completing their education and by graduating, open up a spot for another student to attend.
and serving in families, in Church, in communities and in the work place.”12 This focus set motion to an unprecedented activities program that also contributed to the later development of the BYU-Idaho Learning Model. This activities program was overseen by Clark Gilbert.

Gilbert served on the faculty at Harvard for five years where he researched and taught entrepreneurship and innovation. He too left Harvard to come to BYU–Idaho in the fall of 2006. His first assignment was the Associate Vice President for Student Life, but was quickly changed to Managing Director of the Activities Program and peer-to-peer learning. This role gave Gilbert direct involvement with university students. Innovative activities within the program helped students develop character and enhance leadership skills. A variety of year-round outdoor, social, service, talent, fitness, and sport activities was offered. Each area was structured to give students numerous opportunities for active involvement at various levels of interest and commitment.13 The vision behind the activities program balances with the thoughts of other educational leaders who have emphasized values in envisioning higher education in the twenty-first century: “As we emphasize learning, as we train and develop the professoriate, and as we look for new ways to govern our institutions, we should be sure that we strengthen the dynamic interplay between faculty and their institutions, between intellectual autonomy and community engagement, and between the learning environments in individual classrooms and larger institutional efforts to assure student learning.”14 BYU-Idaho’s renewed focus on student involvement to assure effective student learning propagated the BYU-Idaho Learning Model.

12 Clark, “Inaugural Response.”


BYU-Idaho Learning Model

Germinating in President Clark’s mind prior to arriving at BYU-Idaho was the feeling of a need to take education to Church members in all areas of the world. Making some improvements and changes on campus would be vital to positioning the University to fulfill that mission.\textsuperscript{15} In hopes to create disciple-leaders and unite the power of study and faith, Clark stated that “inspired learning and teaching is the symbolic keystone to the overall campus experience. It brings discipleship preparation and leadership development together in one great whole.”\textsuperscript{16} Beginning in January 2006, Clark worked with Steven Wheelwright—one of his colleagues, who after retiring from the Harvard Business School, joined Clark at BYU-Idaho for a short stint—and they determined that learning together is fundamental for both academic and spiritual purposes.

In 2007, the BYU-Idaho Learning Model was approved and implemented throughout the University as one of the most important things Clark’s presidency did on campus to prepare the University for the future.\textsuperscript{17} The BYU-Idaho Learning Model eventually became a key component in expanding global Church education. Clark’s desire was to create a common framework for learning and teaching across campus that both students and faculty could understand and apply. This model would consist of principles and a process rather than methods.

\textsuperscript{15} Kim B. Clark, interview by author, Salt Lake City, June 16, 2016.


\textsuperscript{17} Kim B. Clark, interview by author, Salt Lake City, June 16, 2016.
that governed effective teaching and learning. The five guiding principles of the Learning Model are: “All learners—including students and faculty,”

1. Exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as a principle of power;
2. Understand that true teaching is done by and with the Spirit of the Holy Ghost;
3. Lay hold upon the word of God as found in the holy scriptures and in the words of the prophets in all disciplines;
4. Act for themselves and accept responsibility for learning and teaching;
5. Love, serve, and teach one another.

The Learning Model was an active learning pedagogy that focused on improving a student’s learning experience by engaging them in the teaching process. It endorsed the notion that teachers become facilitators of learning rather than dispensers of information. The three elements of the Learning Model process are: Prepare, Teach One Another, and Ponder/Prove. It encourages student preparation before attending class in order to deepen classroom discussion, promoting subsequent reflection and deepened understanding of the material covered in class, as the student works to prepare for the following class session. Active learning is essential to the

18 Clark involved the entire BYU-Idaho faculty as they decided on approximately 200 principles that governed effective teaching and learning. A smaller group of faculty were then charged to develop a set of five principles, which they completed 16 months later. (See Clark, “Vision and Change at BYU-Idaho,” 26).

19 The BYU-Idaho Learning Model website is a great repository of information about the Model. url: http://www2.byui.edu/LearningModel/src/default.htm. The five principles of the Learning Model translated to the secular vernacular are: “Step beyond the light you already have, pushing the edge of your current understanding; seek truth and recognize the value of all sources of new insight, knowledge and understanding; Pursue education as a developmental experience for the whole person; Act for yourself and accept responsibility for learning and teaching; Respect, serve and teach each other.” (See Clark, “Vision and Change at BYU-Idaho,” 26).

desired outcome of learning by faith and increasing the quality of the education.\textsuperscript{21} Coupled with the Learning Model in the quest to deepen the learning experience, are the Foundations courses.

The BYU-Idaho Foundations program was instituted in 2008. Comparable to General Education classes, these courses provide a basis to learning foundational principles and deeply rooted information across multiple disciplines and were developed by faculty members to ensure a robust and engaging experience. This form of effective integration across traditional academic boundaries would be valuable to both students in their intellectual development and career path, and to faculty members in their scholarship.\textsuperscript{22} One of the most important things resulting from the Foundations courses was the Family Foundations course.\textsuperscript{23}

Also assisting in improving the student experience at BYU-Idaho was Clark Gilbert. In Gilbert’s cubicle was a diagram of an x-y axis with a slope intercept line ascending to infinity. When asked about the diagram and its accompanying equation, Gilbert responded, “What matters more, the slope or the intercept?” He explained that too often we look at the intercept and think “we’ve arrived.” “But if your set is infinity, then…all that actually matters is your slope—or are you improving?” He continued, “How can I be better? How can I teach more students, how can I reach out? ... I think God only looks at the slope.” \textsuperscript{24} With that same idea emblazoned in his mind, President Clark did not stop: “We’re not done. It’s time to move on to new


\textsuperscript{22} Christensen and Eyring, \textit{The Innovative University}, 265.

\textsuperscript{23} Kim B. Clark interview by Jody and Donna Denning, March 20, 2015, OH 7906, Church History Library.

\textsuperscript{24} Poulter, “Ricks College Becomes Brigham Young University-Idaho,” 122.
challenges and new opportunities…. Innovation will be a constant feature. This school will never ‘arrive’ but will always be in a state of change and innovation and development as we try to find better ways to learn and teach.”

When BYU-Idaho was created the growth trajectory of Church education was changed. For the first time in thirty years, students were now entering the Church Educational System in numbers that had not happened for decades. As student enrollment increased, the University began to reach their enrollment cap. Looking to further decrease the cost per student, and expand the opportunities for students to come to BYU-Idaho, Clark stated that “We think we can lower our costs by growing if we’re careful about how we grow.” He organized a team with the name “Enrollment Enhancement” to explore options to serve more students without increasing costs. Ultimately Clark’s administration sought to expand the enrollment cap without a pro rata increase in the Church’s appropriation to the University. The group analyzed student capacity, average credits earned at graduation, and the number of graduates, in addition to statistical data relative to classroom and seat occupancy rates. Results of their efforts led to a new campus-wide room-scheduling process, and renovations of underutilized rooms. With these disruptive innovations, the University’s total operating cost decreased as the student body grew.

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28 After subsequent teams were organized, this effort became known as “Enrollment Enhancement I.”

Clark was convinced that coupling these innovations with online learning would sustain up to 15,000 students per semester. Board approval was given to increase the student body to 12,500 with prospects of further increases to 15,000 by 2015.\textsuperscript{30} This onset of serving more students would only increase as University administrators sought even greater growth. That growth would come as the University sought to extend its campus even beyond the city limits of Rexburg, Idaho.

\textsuperscript{30} Christensen and Eyring, \textit{The Innovative University}, 307.
CHAPTER FOUR

STRENGTHENING THE BRANCHES – ONLINE LEARNING INITIATIVE

Learning Online

When Ricks College became BYU-Idaho, it was to hold a unique position in the Church Educational System. It remained a teaching-and-learning-centered institution with a singular commission to take advantage of advancements in technology in order to serve more students.\(^1\) On a BYU-Idaho campus visit, President Henry B. Eyring stated that, “the chance to learn in such a faith-filled community as this is out of the reach—but not out of the hope—of thousands.”\(^2\) Essential in accomplishing the charge to realize that hope is the burgeoning BYU-Idaho Online program.

CES online efforts began in 1998 when BYU-Provo offered for the first time an online Bachelor of General Studies degree. This degree was developed for individuals who had completed 30 or more credits at the Provo campus and desired to complete their degree online. David Bednar emphasized in his inaugural response that “technology can and should play a supporting and complementing role in our work of educating...[to] distinguish us from other institutions of higher education.”\(^3\) Alan Young, a first-year doctoral student at the University of Georgia, was prompted to return to Rexburg for reasons that were unclear to him at the time. Young quickly became involved in the design of online courses that could be offered to on-campus students at BYU-Idaho. In September 2000 Ricks College began offering 22 online

\(^1\) Hinckley, “Announcement: Ricks College to Become BYU-Idaho.”


\(^3\) Bednar, “Inaugural Response.”
courses. In 2001 the number of online offerings grew to 28 online courses and 9 hybrid courses where half of the course was in the classroom and half was done online. It was not until 2005 when BYU-Idaho began exploring other models for online education.

The Vision of Online Learning

The first principal of the school that eventually became BYU-Idaho once stated that, “the seeds we are planting today will grow and become mighty oaks, and their branches will run all over the earth.” The vision of BYU-Idaho’s expansive reach is often rooted in this statement made on the opening day of Rexburg’s new academy. It can be traced back even further to the admonitions given in the Doctrine and Covenants, mentioned in the introduction to this thesis. Other previous presidents of Ricks College have also given glimpses into a purpose for the school that would span across cultures, space, and time. Henry B. Eyring said, “We must also find ways for this college to serve young people whose needs are shaped by a great variety of cultures and situations, and who may not be able to come to this campus. We will find direct ways to move the blessing of education . . . from this campus out into the lives of men and women everywhere.”

In his inaugural address David A. Bednar stated:

New technologies, innovative pedagogies, and more sophisticated students are challenging us to rethink and reevaluate many of our most fundamental assumptions about the process of learning and teaching…. It will be necessary for us at Ricks College to serve ever better the thousands of students we have on campus while simultaneously reaching out to bless the lives of tens of thousands

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4 These minimal course offerings were essentially BYU online classes plugged into the Blackboard Learning Management System. Courses included 100-200 level courses in Accounting, Humanities, History, Political Science, Sociology, Theater, Philosophy, Math, English, and Religion.

5 Crowder, The Spirit of Ricks.

6 H.B. Eyring, “Inaugural Response.”
of young Latter-day Saints throughout the world. We have an ever increasing responsibility to use the resources of this great campus to assist in the building of the kingdom of God in all the world.…

We must learn how to assist and bless institute students and other LDS youth in Rhode Island and Rome while effectively serving our students on campus in Rexburg.⁷

And more recently, he remarked “As long as intellectual modesty, humility, gratitude, obedience, and frugality continue to characterize those who learn and serve at BYU–Idaho, then this university will shine forth ever brighter as a beacon of righteousness and of inspired educational innovation.”⁸

During his time at Harvard, Clark had some involvement using technology in education and after being invited by Gordon B. Hinckley to become president of BYU-Idaho, He began researching previous University addresses given by Bednar and Henry B. Eyring. Clark sensed from their messages that BYU-Idaho existed to serve more than those who came to the campus in Southeastern Idaho. As he prepared his inaugural response, he saw an image of children across the world who would make and keep covenants with the Lord and he knew that the Lord desires to bless them with education. He felt that it was BYU-Idaho’s responsibility to take education to them.⁹ In his inaugural response, Clark said:

.ReadByte("We will find new ways to use information technology to reach more students and to deepen the learning experience of those we touch. In a day not far from now, we will be able to break down the barriers of time and space and connect our students on internships or between semesters to the university and to each other and, in that way, create outstanding, interactive educational experiences for them. In these experiences students will teach one another in new and powerful ways.

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⁷ David A. Bednar, “Inaugural Address.”
⁹ Kim B. Clark, interview with author, Salt Lake City, June 16, 2016. See also Clark, “Inaugural Response.”
I believe that at BYU-Idaho we must learn to use new technologies and develop methods, materials, programs, and concepts that not only can be applied to our students on and off our campus, but also can be effectively and efficiently applied by others across the Church and, indeed, across the world. I am convinced that this university is in this valley where our pioneer heritage is deeply ingrained, where the people are humble and faithful, so that we can be a proving ground of great fidelity for education that will bless the young people of the Church worldwide.10

In 2005, Henry J. Eyring arrived at BYU-Idaho as Associate Academic Vice-President with responsibility for online learning and instructional technology. Eyring explained that for him, the online learning initiative began on a hilltop in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. Visiting the country in 1998 in search of prospective MBA students for BYU’s Marriott School of Management, Eyring discovered that one of the problems he faced was finding applicants that were able to qualify for MBA study and leave their homeland. He found himself on the top of a hill that stood above one of the world’s largest slums. A close observation of the temporary shanties below revealed satellite dishes on the rooftops of a neighborhood with open sewers. Certain that something could be done to use technology to reach even into the slums, Eyring mentioned the idea to his father who was serving as Commissioner of Church Education.11 The younger Eyring envisioned the possibility of using technology to offer quality education to even the impoverished. He would later fill a significant role in realizing this vision.

**Bachelor of University Studies Degree and Online Learning**

After Kim Clark and Henry J. Eyring arrived at BYU-Idaho in 2005, Clark said it was remarkably clear that a big part of the future of the University would be taking quality education

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10 Clark, “Inaugural Response.”

to the world. Their initial strategy was to continue to develop some online courses internally, but to supplement those with courses they would purchase from BYU in Provo. They engaged in protracted negotiations with BYU to purchase some 90 courses, however BYU had allowed faculty members to maintain ownership in their courses and was not able to sell them. As negotiations ended, Clark and his online team, including Alan Young, had decided on a cohort, semester-based concept and began losing interest in an independent study model.\textsuperscript{12}

Through their Continuing Education department, BYU-Idaho began pursuing a semester-based online bachelor’s degree program in July 2005, while simultaneously working to improve existing online courses and propose designs for new courses. BYU-Idaho eventually began offering an online Bachelor of University Studies degree in September 2007 with the intent of allowing students who had formerly completed at least 30 credits on campus an opportunity to finish their degree online with no classroom component. The University did not have all the needed online courses available when they began offering the Bachelor of University Studies degree so they partnered with BYU Independent Study to fill in the courses that were lacking. Each BYU-Idaho online course would enroll students from three groups: online degree-seeking students, on-campus students desiring an online course, and off-track students whose assigned educational track did not convene during the current semester.\textsuperscript{13}

When Clark’s team had looked at purchasing online courses from BYU, they began looking through the course designs and realized that in order to accomplish their vision, they

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\textsuperscript{12} Kim B. Clark, “President Clark on the Evolving Approach to Online Learning at BYU-Idaho,” February 10, 2012, unpublished transcript, in author’s possession. The cohort model was likely influenced by the BYU-Idaho remote-site RN to BSN nursing programs where cohorts had already been proven as a successful way for remote students to provide much needed peer support.

\textsuperscript{13} Most students enroll for two of the three semesters: Winter-Summer, Summer-Fall, or Fall-Winter. A student is considered “off-track” during the semester in which they are not enrolled.
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would need to completely redo the courses. Clark contends that it was not an issue of “Not Invented Here” syndrome, but rather that it would take as much work to rewrite the courses to fit their objectives, as it would to simply create new courses themselves. As they began developing courses, they saw their own on-campus courses as their biggest opportunity.\footnote{Clark, “President Clark on the Evolving Approach to Online Learning at BYU-Idaho.”}

Nationally, online university courses had been expanding. In 2002, less than 50% of college and university leaders considered online education critical to their long-term strategy. By 2012, this number sprang to 69%. At the present time almost one-third of all college students are currently taking at least one course in which at least 80% of the content is delivered online.\footnote{Marjorie Roth Leon and Todd Alan Price, “On the Cutting Edge: Movements and Institutional Examples of Technological Disruption,” \textit{New Directions for Higher Education}, no. 173 (Spring 2016): 103, accessed June 24, 2016, ProQuest Ebrary.}

Though online education faces criticisms of threatening the quality of education, others argue that “Internet-supported teaching and learning are the most important innovation in education since the printing press.”\footnote{Michael Beaudoin, “Issues in Distance Education; A Primer for higher Education Decision Makers,” \textit{New Directions for Higher Education}, no. 173 (Spring 2016): 11, accessed June 24, 2016, ProQuest Ebrary.}

In the view of traditional education, the transition to online learning can be seen as disruptive to be sure. Harvard Business School Professor Clayton Christensen’s extensive research, however, has defined this type of variation as “disruptive innovation.”\footnote{See Clayton M. Christensen, \textit{The Innovator’s Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail}, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1997).} In order to advance distance education, innovative educators must explore resourceful ways to use instructional technology to build collective knowledge through pedagogical innovation, rather than perpetuate debilitating aspects of the prevailing educational system.\footnote{Beaudoin, “Issues in Distance Education,” 15.} In the design of their
online courses, BYU-Idaho had nearly broken precedent in their effort to first build course quality. A lead developer in course design in Rexburg asserted that “the quality of the learning experience is the top priority for any online course created at BYU-Idaho.”¹⁹ The University sought to enrich the experience and expand educational opportunities rather than sacrifice quality for quantity.

One scholar noted that “there is obvious irony in the fact that although the college experience can be transformative for so many people, the learning organization is inherently resistant to transforming itself.”²⁰ Some colleges and universities are currently facing such challenges that their survival may necessitate adaptations to reach an expanded student body in varying demographic circumstances. BYU-Idaho’s endeavor toward online education has been gradual, owing much of its achievement to the spirit of pioneering and innovation that has been a part of the institution since its founding in 1888. More recently, with Clark’s leadership, the University has created a culture where the challenge of innovation has become less of a dilemma and rather a transformational milieu for effective change.

Advancing toward global education, Clark charged Eyring in 2007 to form a team known as Enrollment Enhancement II. His hope was to expand even more online education beyond the Rexburg campus, even reaching young people who were often seen as unfit for college. It was believed that some form of online education could enable the University to serve more students while simultaneously increasing quality of education and reducing relative costs per student. Eyring appointed Clark Gilbert as a lead in the online initiative.


²⁰ Beaudoin, “Issues in Distance Education,” 16.
Gilbert, who was about to receive tenure at the Harvard Business School, came to BYU-Idaho in 2006 on a prompting that required a step in the dark. At Harvard, Gilbert was considered an expert at applying Clayton Christensen’s theory of disruptive innovation. Included in his theory was the idea that in order to successfully innovate, an organization must create a separate entity that will lead innovative efforts. This would prevent the existing entity from feeling threatened by internal innovative competition, and also preclude the existing entity from dismissing innovation as disruptive or impractical. In previous jobs, Gilbert had run the separate innovative entity; however, in this case Clark admonished him that they were not going to set up a group independent from the University. Ultimately, the two decided that the online organization would remain within the University, but that it would be separate from traditional departments—separate, but integrated. Clark’s thought was to create a boundary that said there is such a thing as an online organization that is great at serving students online and “takes us into a whole new world, but also have that organization to be an integral part of the University”—keeping department chairs, syllabi, and processes connected. The idea was to have one admissions office and one advising organization. Critical to this vision was the desire to assure accreditors that the online division was part of the University under the guidance of the academic vice-president, and also to preserve a common student experience. Clark asserted, “There is tremendous logic for splitting off—the University of Maryland has done that. But our strategy was one university.”21

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21 Clark, “President Clark on the Evolving Approach to Online Learning.” The University of Maryland has historically had an evening program for adults which was eventually split into a completely separate entity known as University of Maryland University College (UMUC). UMUC is one of the largest providers of distance and online education in the U.S. UMUC serves over 90,000 students globally and has a 100% acceptance rate for undergraduates. The University offers bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees as well as undergraduate and graduate certificates. (See U.S. News and World Report online, accessed June 29, 2016, http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/umuc-11644).
Planning on successful innovation while preserving departmental integration between the online learning team and other departments and faculty proved difficult. Clark was convinced that such a project would not succeed at Harvard or any other place. This initiative with no precedent model to follow, would draw upon the consecration of BYU-Idaho’s employees. Clark’s technical term for their effort was “muddling through.” President Henry B. Eyring repeatedly stated to Clark that, “We don’t really know what this is going to be. But we know it’s the right thing to do.” Clark’s instruction was to be ready for inspiration. “We know what it’s going to look like for the next couple of years… But we have to be ready to be inspired by the Lord because he’s in charge, and we can’t see everything he sees.”

Eyring and Gilbert also involved two professors—Janine Gilbert, and Paul Johanson—who helped design the original BYU-Idaho online courses—one in English and the other in math. Desiring to pilot the course in a remote location, they partnered with BYU-Hawaii—where Steven Wheelwright was then serving as president—to gather online students in Rexburg and Laie for a weekly face-to-face classroom experience. The gathering in each location was overseen by a student who had already taken the course. This peer mentor facilitated the classroom discussion using principles and steps from the Learning Model. One of the courses that was taught in partnership with BYU-Hawaii was an English course where students would gather remotely once or twice a week to work on assigned activities—all student-teacher communication was done online. These pilot classes taught the team that distance learning courses needed to be a hybrid of online and classroom instruction.

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22 Clark, “President Clark on the Evolving Approach to Online Learning.”
Increasing Course Quality

BYU-Idaho began offering online courses to on-campus students shortly after the University’s creation in 2000. The university then required each student to complete at least one online course—now referred to as “legacy courses”—before graduation. At that point, fifty such courses were being offered. Prior to the development of the online Bachelor of University Studies degree, courses were originally designed so that students could work at their own pace, and had no student-to-student interaction. When Clark Gilbert became involved in leading the University’s online learning efforts in 2008, he sought to make the online offerings a meaningful learning experience. To do so required innovative course designs and hybrid strategies that engaged students in a combination of online and in-class settings. This blended course design allowed certain learning activities such as lectures and testing to be done more effectively online, while allowing class discussion to take place in the classroom, and also through online forums—simultaneously increasing quality while lowering costs. Clark counselled the online team concerning the type of courses they were to design:

We’re not trying to make BMW courses. There are people in the world who are, and they are BMWs. We are building more like Corollas and maybe Camrys and Avalons. What that means is that the heart of what we’re doing is discipline, consistency, and high quality in the sense of repeatability and execution—but we figure out how to add variation and flexibility at low cost. If you dig into this, an amazing thing occurs. The Japanese have gotten so good at this that they can produce a Corolla, a Camry, and a pickup on the same assembly line because they’ve figured out how to train their people and configure their systems. The principles and the systems are exactly the same as they were years ago.24

Gilbert was a protégé of Harvard Business School Professor, Clayton Christensen, who suggested a “student-centric” approach to education—including online education. His assertion was that hybrid online learning caters to the unique learning styles and preferences of each

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24 Clark, “President Clark on the Evolving Approach to Online Learning.”
student, which can be hard to do exclusively in a classroom setting. Christensen further contended that online technology in education should be utilized so as to enhance the learning experience and not simply to “cram” computers into existing educational models.\(^\text{25}\) Gilbert brought authentic experience applying Christensen’s “disruptive innovation” to the news print industry. Now he would have the opportunity to employ it in higher education. At the outset of the online initiative Gilbert created a high degree of separation for the online team. He contended that to bring about innovation in higher education that was disruptive rather than incremental, he could not simply hold administration and faculty responsible for the traditional educational model to oversee and implement the innovation.\(^\text{26}\) The creation of this initiative was done by creating a distinct organization within the University, but functioning separately and independently from other BYU-Idaho organizations.\(^\text{27}\)

The focus of the University’s online efforts was not to displace traditional higher education, but instead to “improve and preserve” the traditional campus experience while disseminating it to individuals who would never be able to come to Rexburg.\(^\text{28}\) Thus, the decision was made to not allow online course development to become a separate activity from the rest of the University. Increasing course quality would include maximizing receipt of both knowledge and understanding. Experience had shown that knowledge could be more efficiently transmitted via an online course, however understanding was increasingly obtained and quality


\(^{27}\) Gilbert would later call these “exchange teams.”

\(^{28}\) Eaton, “BYU-Idaho’s Distinctive Approach to Learning Online,” 5. Ron Campbell had oversight for online efforts, and had invited Peter Williams to manage the online team. Williams worked with University faculty, and instructional designers to design and implement online courses.
experience had more often existed in a classroom model. With a focus on quality first, it was decided that BYU-Idaho online courses were cohort-based with high levels of student collaboration—rather than following an independent study model. Online course offerings began and ended aligning with on-campus semester calendars. This approach required students to meet weekly preparation and assignment deadlines, and engage in activities—including structured learning activities with other students—and discussions within the semester schedule. Online courses were organized around interactive groups of 10 to 15 students, and had an enrollment cap of 90 students in each course section, though most students were put into a learning team of about 5 students and each section had about 35-40 students.  

Gilbert and his team recognized the value of the Learning Model and sought to design the online courses following the principles outlined in the Model in order to maximize student engagement and overall student learning experience. This style of online course required a unique teaching style. “It is a style of fostering student relationships, guiding student conversations, assessing student progress in critical thinking and analysis, and fostering participation and involvement, all through a largely text-based communication medium.”

BYU-Idaho’s approach to online course development involved an “exchange team” called a course development team. This team allowed for appropriate levels of both separation from, and integration with the University campus. The online development team would work under department stewardship, but within the boundaries established by the University for online courses. The team included a department faculty member who served as the lead for the course who would be responsible for the online offering of that course. The department set the learning...
outcomes, the assessments and the content of the course. The online team assisted in course development. The council involved an online instructor, an instructional designer and others that could possibly include a student assistant project manager, student media developers, and a programmer. At the start of course development, the Curriculum Development team would venture out into the specific department and find an approved faculty member who could serve as the content expert and the lead for the course. They then assigned a curriculum designer who is both an instructional designer and a project manager for the course project. These two individuals counseled together with the rest of the development team employing the best practices for teaching students within their respective disciplines. Each course development team worked together in a process that includes phases of preparation, development, review and pilot.

Organizing exchange teams was met with harsh opposition from faculty and others on campus. A survey among the campus faculty involved in online course councils demonstrated an approximate 20% approval rating of the online initiative. After spending a few semesters working with course leads and other faculty members, campus approval for these course councils and the online initiative had improved to 80%.31 Typical of disruptive innovation can be friction caused by undesired change. Both time and change have proven that in Rexburg these “bumps and rubs” do not cause much friction. Clark attributes it to the spirit of consecration that permeates the faculty of BYU-Idaho.32 In a willingness to sacrifice what they might love most in favor of what the Lord wants even more for the students, faculty members at BYU-Idaho proved faithful to the pioneering spirit that has for so long enveloped that institution.33

32 Clark, BYU-Idaho Faculty Banquet, May 20, 2011.
33 See Eyring, H.B., “A Steady Upward Course.”
Attempting to design an integrated curriculum, course designers faced a dilemma: should online courses replicate campus courses in every detail? Or should they have an identity of their own, determined by the instructors’ vision and teaching styles? A team was organized in 2009 to address these questions. Their conclusion was somewhere in between. The team settled on five key dimensions in creating online courses that were tied to campus: course learning outcomes were to match campus courses; each course would be built around an explicit Learning Model architecture; a blend of fixed and elective course content would be determined in the course design; the highest level of personal and professional adaptation would be employed using a master teaching plan as a foundation; and course assessments would be fixed and determined by the course development team.34

Involving full-time faculty with course creation, and requiring department approval of the course descriptions and outcomes tied the University’s online entity back to the campus and facilitated a coherent aim at accomplishing the University’s mission to create disciple-leaders. Furthering the effort to create one university was the request that on-campus courses maintain the same outcomes and assessments as their online equivalents.

During the preparation phase the team gathered together a high level overview of what the course will be, including course outcomes, key assessments, and learning materials. Curriculum development teams aligned their efforts with the Learning Model allowing students to progress together and learn from each other. As the team dug deeper into course design and development, they created a prototype lesson, the Learning Model architecture of the lesson, and a graphic design template for the course. They also created a course map that includes each of the course learning activities and how they connect to the learning outcomes. Assessments were

34 Gilbert, Sanders, Williams, and Young, “Online Learning.” 74.
then created before all course design was reviewed. The review process included quality assurance checks against the University’s standards, as well as product testing by student employees, and by instructors.

Once a course was reviewed it was put into a pilot phase where the course development lead, the instructional designer, and the online instructor would counsel together on a weekly basis to discuss needed improvements. They gathered evaluation data from the instructor, the instructor’s teaching group leader, and from students in order to refine the course. 35 Once the course was ready, it would scale to include more section offerings the following semester. Online courses could then be updated perpetually as improvements were needed, or as new technologies and innovations emerged. Course development teams were also charged to create courses that were not only engaging, but also scalable to thousands of students.

Initial program needs necessitated an expeditious rollout of course production. In these early days there was no process in place for improving course quality. Several team members recall visiting and observing student gatherings where they made note of the need for careful course improvement. Several students would work out problems on the board and they couldn’t seem to come up with a solution that matched the ones in the course material. After further review by those observing the group, the Pathway team noticed several errors in the course material. Steve Adams was appointed as improvement manager and helped implement the idea of course councils.36 In addition to their individually assigned duties relating to the council, each person also held a strong voice in the general council as they sought to improve course quality.

35 The teaching group is explained in the section titled, “Extending the BYU-Idaho Experience.”

36 These councils were patterned after Elder M. Russell Ballard’s theory of councils noted in his book, Counseling with Our Councils. Integral to course councils was the notion that everyone on the council was given both specific and general responsibilities.
These councils operated in conjunction with a new improvement office. These systems for ensuring quality were joined by the creation of a research and development office—that looked to the future and tested new technology—and an evaluation office.

Experience had taught Gilbert and his team that “when online courses are well-designed, both student satisfaction and measured learning can perform at levels comparable to even the most successful campus courses.” Online learning innovations at BYU-Idaho ultimately focused on increasing education fidelity in distinct circumstances across the globe. It was decided that the core curriculum remain consistent for each individual course, though teaching strategies could offer an array of diversity.

Course readings served as a foundation for learning activities that formed the core design of each course. Graphics, video, and animations were used moderately and pointedly to enhance the learner’s experience and the likelihood that knowledge and understanding would take root within the students’ heart and mind. Using an integrated curriculum allowed the University to utilize existing programs and accreditation by simply extending those programs through online learning mediums.

Once designed, the online courses were taught by a full-time faculty member—usually one of the course developers—and were tested for efficacy in achieving the course objectives. Improvements were then made, and future course offerings were taught by full-time faculty members or adjunct instructors. With the cohort-based model, where student-to-student and

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37 Gilbert, Sanders, Williams, and Young, “Online Learning,” 73.

38 Fidelity in education will be addressed in more detail at the end of this chapter.

student-to-teacher interaction are a priority, online courses would have required an enrollment cap. With this understanding, BYU-Idaho launched the online initiative in 2008 using online forums, discussion boards, podcasts, and wikis.\textsuperscript{40} University administrators anticipated that being able to increase course offerings without adding brick-and-mortar classrooms, the relative cost per student would decline.

The BYU-Idaho online experience is deeply founded in the University’s mission. Evidence of this can be seen in the following: pricing philosophy; unconventional disruptive innovation; uniquely collaborative curriculum development; integrated instruction oversight; significant opportunities for students to interact with teachers and with peers online; and a curriculum focused on enabling students to act and learn by faith. The latter is the most distinct characteristic of BYU-Idaho Online courses. This was because of the University’s belief that learning is sacred and is “most likely to take place when students are given ample opportunity to act and exercise their faith in the Lord and seek divine assistance in the process of learning.”\textsuperscript{41}

\textbf{Extending the BYU-Idaho Experience}

By fall Semester of 2009, faculty-driven course development teams had created more than 30 new online courses, and remote adjunct instructors had been hired to teach them. Obviously present in these courses was the BYU-Idaho Learning Model with a focus on student engagement—students teaching and serving each other.

Remote adjunct instructors were screened, interviewed and approved by a council of associate vice presidents, associate deans, and department chairs. Each instructor completed a

\textsuperscript{40} Clark Gilbert, Matt Sanders, Peter Williams, Alan Young, “Online Learning: Extending the BYU-Idaho Experience,” \textit{Perspective}, Autumn 2009, 69.

\textsuperscript{41} Eaton, “BYU-Idaho’s Distinctive Approach to Learning Online,” 1-9.
40-hour training course emphasizing teaching and learning. Instructors were assigned to a teaching group where collaboration and evaluations could improve teaching and facilitate administration decisions. Although the remote instructors were trained and managed by the University’s online learning division—which at the time was overseen by the Continuing Education department—department chair approval of all online instructors once again tied this innovative unit to the University’s campus. During one round of recruiting efforts in 2009 in seven U.S. states, 765 applications were received, 90 interviews were conducted and 39 new online instructors were hired.\(^\text{42}\) The online team has also received up to as many as 700 applications for one job.\(^\text{43}\)

As the initial online courses were made available, only on-campus students were allowed to enroll. Instruction of these first-generation classes was provided by one of the on-campus faculty members involved in the course design. This experiment revealed a problem: because full-time faculty members were accustomed to developing a course as they taught it, the online courses were left incomplete and difficult for a remote instructor to teach.\(^\text{44}\) Adjustments were made and remote online instructors were then assigned to teach the courses the first time they were offered.

One year after launching the online learning initiative, the University offered more than 2,000 total on-campus courses, with hopes to develop 150 online courses that would provide 20 percent of the University’s total student credit hours. Online course offerings would increase potential on-campus enrollment by 2,400 each year.

\(^\text{42}\) Clark Gilbert, Matt Sanders, Peter Williams, Alan Young, “Online Learning: Extending the BYU-Idaho Experience,” \textit{Perspective}, Autumn 2009, 70.

\(^\text{43}\) Clark, “Vision and Change at BYU-Idaho,” 27.

\(^\text{44}\) Young, “Innovation and Global eLearning,” 91.
As can be expected with such disruptive innovation as online higher education, some faculty members and others were skeptical and concerned about the University’s ability to deliver high-quality education to people at a distance. Williams—who came to BYU-Idaho in 2007 to help launch the Online Degree program—felt confident that quality instructors were being added to the team. He had occasion to interview applicants to work as remote adjunct instructors in the first years of the online initiative, and recalls from one of their first rounds of interviews an individual who applied to teach a course in organizational behavior. This particular individual held a successful career as a vice-president and legal counsel for a large organization. He had been adjunct teaching at the BYU Salt Lake Center for twenty-five years and teaching online with the University of Phoenix for five years. When he was asked why he would want to teach online for BYU-Idaho he explained with some emotion that he had sensed that the Church would one day want to reach many more members through online teaching and he wanted to be prepared to help. Williams describes this type of discussion by saying, “The Lord had been going before us and [was] preparing people to help.”

BYU-Idaho Online secured quality instructors who seemed to share the same spirit of consecration referred to by Clark. As the courses were rolled-out, quality of student learning experiences were “very good,” and each course underwent routine analysis and revision. Course quality continued to increase and the model appeared to be more cost effective than the campus-based model. As faculty immersed themselves in online course creation, most found that

45 Peter Williams, interview with author, Rexburg, October 30, 2015.
articulating the courses for online delivery impelled them to reconsider and enrich the quality of their course in the classroom.\textsuperscript{46} In Clark’s original vision of these courses he stated:

Campus programs would themselves, over time, be transformed by what we learn in the online world and vice versa. There would be a flow and understanding that would help us be the very best we could be—that we learn how to take advantage of and exploit in a good sense the fact that there would be many students in many different countries and many different kinds of learning experiences and we would exploit that and learn from it and get better at the core mission of learning and teaching and we would become the very finest institution of learning and teaching in the world.\textsuperscript{47}

\section*{A Proving Ground of Fidelity}

In his inaugural address at BYU-Idaho, President Kim B. Clark declared, “I am convinced that this university is in this valley where our pioneer heritage is deeply ingrained, where the people are humble and faithful, so that we can be a proving ground of great fidelity for education that will bless the young people of the Church worldwide.”\textsuperscript{48} He further explained that a test of good fidelity is one that yields results on a small scale that accurately reflect—and thus predict—performance on a much larger scale.\textsuperscript{49} Vice-President Henry J. Eyring also observed that:

As we build an ever-better university, we can be a proving ground for education of great fidelity relative to the needs of all Church members, including the poorest. Somehow, our deeply ingrained pioneer heritage, manifest in humility and faith, will allow us to discover means of learning here that will work everywhere. The cost of this education will be low enough and the quality high enough. And we will prove it here first. The path to Rio, as it were, somehow runs through Rexburg.

\textsuperscript{46} Alan Young, Joel Galbraith, and Steven Adams, “BYU-Idaho’s Evolving Approach to Online Course Quality,” \textit{Perspective}, Fall 2012, 26.

\textsuperscript{47} Clark, “President Clark on the Evolving Approach to Online Learning at BYU-Idaho.”

\textsuperscript{48} Clark, “Inaugural Response,” (emphasis added).

\textsuperscript{49} Eyring, H.J. “A Vision of Online Learning,” 59.
Specifically, doing our innovation in Rexburg, primarily to meet the needs of traditional students, makes it more likely that what ultimately gets to Rio will be of high quality. Too commonly, distance education is developed as just that—a technology-delivered approximation of what happens in the classroom. The assumption is that the student learning at a distance will get some fraction of what she might on a real campus. Unfortunately, these low expectations are inevitably fulfilled.\textsuperscript{50}

By 2008, BYU-Idaho had capitalized on technology to enhance the on-campus learning experience, designed and made available dozens of innovative online courses, as well as an online Baccalaureate degree program. The University was changing through processes of disruptive innovation to “reinvent undergraduate education.” BYU-Idaho faculty could dream of the day when the University’s online learning capabilities would merge with peer instruction, the work of the Perpetual Education Fund and Church Institutes of Religion internationally, though at the time the path from Rexburg to the rest of the world was only visible as far as Rigby. Their efforts were close to home, “reaching methodically beyond the confines of the campus” through an innovative model that generated high quality at a low cost. This innovation and change would not end. “The phrase ‘rethinking education’ is not to be only a slogan for the transformation from a two-to-four-year status, the school is to be a place of educational innovation—permanently.”\textsuperscript{51}

The next phase of innovation was already in the works.

\textsuperscript{50} Eyring, H.J. “A Vision of Online Learning,” 61.

\textsuperscript{51} Eyring, H.B. “A Steady, Upward Course.”
“Technology and Institute Buildings”

While serving as President of BYU-Idaho in 1972, President Henry B. Eyring led a committee for the Church Educational System to examine the long-term future of higher education in the Church. Fundamental to the committee’s purpose was the question, “How can we extend the reach and increase the impact of the Church Educational System’s post-secondary education?” Committee discussions included the potential role of Institutes of Religion and technology to further the reach of Church education. Institute buildings would provide an enormous capital resource—approximately 1,000 buildings around the world—that could allow such a program to expand worldwide.

They had envisioned faith-based learning that would take place in CES campuses, Institute campuses, chapels, and homes. The committee stated:

The primary limits on our reaching people are the high cost of bricks and mortar for campuses and the scarcity of great teachers who can and do teach through study and faith. The way to break these limits is to make it possible for a student to have the benefits of the great teacher without having to sit with thirty to three hundred students in a room enclosed with walls built on land purchased with tithing funds.

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1 Specifically, the committee sought to “present CES facilities to educate more students at approximately the same cost,” as well as how it could “make education available to those who cannot attend CES campuses.” (Report of the Select Committee on Higher Education, 3).

2 As of 2016, the Institute Program operates in approximately 1,000 buildings worldwide.


The committee’s work was visionary, though decades ahead of its time. Henry B. Eyring recalls that “it was more a feeling of what ought to be than what would be.”\(^5\) His vision of that future did not seem to change as he addressed the BYU faculty in 1993:

Ricks College will respond to the admissions pressures caused by the growth of the Church and their enrollment limit in a way also made possible by its roots. . . . The faculty drawn there have, with only rare exceptions, put their whole hearts into the proposition that what a student has done in the past is no limit on the future. . . . It is hard to see how they will do it, but even as a smaller and smaller fraction of the Church can attend Ricks College, it will find a way to admit students in whom other faculties might not see the potential.\(^6\)

Fifteen years later, and a few months prior to launching the BYU-Idaho online initiative, Clark decided in April 2008 that with a model in place, it was an appropriate time to forge a program that would allow the University to reach individuals across the globe. Clark ran projections of the LDS population of 18-year-olds in North America. There was a projected decline that would bottom-out in 2011 followed by a substantial spike beginning in 2014 (see figure 1).

Regardless of the then decline in college-aged LDS students, BYU-Idaho’s enrollment was on the rise. The fear was that if enrollment was increasing with a regressive populace, what would happen in 2014 when the trend reverses and thousands and thousands of 18-year-olds are graduating from high school every year? In hopes to address educational needs that were not being met, Clark’s intent was that if they would not be able to attend in Rexburg, the University would go to them. His vision however, was not that of any old online program.

\(^5\) Eaton, “A Brief History of Online and Pathway.”

Figure 1 Trend of North American LDS 18-Year-Olds


Resulting from their eighteen months of research, Clark’s “Enrollment Enhancement” team had already received approval from the Church’s Executive Committee to double the size of BYU-Idaho in Rexburg. The group was now weeks away from presenting their proposal to the Church Board of Education. Determined however, that additional growth must take place, Clark approached Gilbert and proposed the initiative to take education far beyond the borders of campus. He insisted that a proposal be drafted to take to the Executive Committee two weeks later.

Clark Gilbert sought the help of J.D. Griffith, who had been working for Ron Campbell in Continuing Education. On November 26, 2008, Griffith was called to meet with Gilbert, Campbell, and Henry J. Eyring together with Betty Oldham who worked as a special assistant to the president for strategy and planning. The group explained the concept of taking online

7 Griffith’s previous responsibilities included overseeing University programs such as Education Week and Especially for Youth.
education worldwide and asked him to join the effort. That night, Griffith recorded in his journal, “My next new assignment is trying to determine if we can work with institute buildings and teachers in certain parts of the country and teach BYU-Idaho classes at those buildings—a mix of hybrid and internet classes—in order to reach more students.” 8 He initially spent half of his time with this new initiative and the other half leading efforts to place student teachers in the teacher education program.9

Using a model that involved both technology and institute buildings to expand education was an idea that had germinated in Clark’s mind before arriving in Rexburg. The idea also became apparent in his inaugural response when he stated that the University’s efforts to reach more students “may come through educational activities and programs initiated by the Church-in wards and branches, in stakes, and in seminaries and institutes.”10

In 2007, BYU-Idaho had focused an initiative on preparing entering BYU-Idaho students for their on-campus experience. Through a series of online resources, the Pre-matriculation Project would help admitted students plan their university study course and commit to the BYU-Idaho Honor Code before arriving on campus. Speaking of this initiative, Henry J. Eyring stated, “If we can help them learn by the Spirit and make important decisions without the benefit of having been on our campus, we’ll have discovered more of the pedagogy required to someday lift those who will never come here.”11

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9 Assisting Griffith in his responsibilities was his secretary, Lynne Landon.
10 Clark, “Inaugural Response.”
Determined to pursue this vision of online education involving institute buildings, Clark spoke with Henry B. Eyring, who was a member of BYU-Idaho’s Board of Trustees and the Church’s First Presidency. Eyring agreed that questions should be asked and that there may be more that the Church can do in utilizing these resources to carry education to the people. Clark then approached Griffith and expressed the poignant feeling he had that “there is something with institute buildings and online education,” and commissioned him to find out what it was.

Griffith’s background in marketing led him to seek out possible opportunities.

Within two weeks, all of the pieces came together to form the initial seeds of what would become the Pathway program. Griffith and Gilbert rigorously worked on a proposal that was presented by Kim B. Clark to the CES Executive Committee on December 17, 2008. The proposal, titled “Expanded Educational Opportunities,” suggested a two-pronged approach to providing opportunities for the 36,800 LDS North American 18-year-olds who did not plan to attend college and the 15,200 who would receive minimal vocational training. It was proposed that online courses would be offered through BYU-Idaho, “coupled with religious education and gathering opportunities available at local institutes.” Clark considered the gathering element critical to providing “assurance, encouragement, social interaction, and a sense of purpose for

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12 It is sometimes customary for presidents of Church universities to do what they call “home teaching” with members of the Executive Committee and Board of Education. This is an appropriate process where they may discuss ideas and counsel together with individual members of the Committee and Board before presenting proposed plans for formal approval (Kim B. Clark, Interview with the author, August 23, 2016).

13 Griffith recalls, “I would go to [Clark] Gilbert’s office, and we would discuss all our ideas until we hit a hurdle, and then we would walk down the hall to President Clark’s office and get clarification. Between myself, Clark Gilbert, and President Clark, we began to create the foundation of what we now call the Pathway program.” (Aiden Foote, “From Clark to Gilbert,” Pathway Newsletter May 2015, http://www.byui.edu/pathway/newsletter-archive/may-2015/feature-article-from-clark-to-gilbert, accessed June 6, 2016.

students who traditionally would not seek a higher education experience.” Also hoping to tap into the spiritual benefits of such a program, the proposal suggested that “providing expanded academic options would increase the motivation for these students to gather—thus creating an additional avenue for spiritually strengthening these young people.”15

Furthermore, the proposal stated—

The pilot, to be done in partnership with Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, will target groups of students in three or four locations that have a large LDS population, a strong BYU-Idaho alumni base, a healthy Institute program, and established BYU-Idaho distant site learning programs. Interested students would enroll in 1) online courses offered through BYU-Idaho, the same courses offered on campus, with the same academic processes, time lines, and standards, and 2) approved religious education courses offered through the Institute—with these credits being posted on a BYU-Idaho transcript that would track the student’s work. These students would gather and work with other students at the Institute. Those interested could qualify for the BYU-Idaho online Bachelor of University Studies degree by being admitted to the University, attending Institute, and completing graduation requirements.16

Initial concerns expressed by the Board related to whether or not the University could successfully educate this way, and whether they could maintain control over what would be happening in these distant sites.17 Approval of the pilot program was given by the Board of Trustees on January 14, 2009—a surprisingly expeditious response. Now that the proposal was approved for pilot, it became immediately necessary to begin designing the program and coordinating logistics.

With hopes to enroll pilot students that fall semester, on January 29, J.D. Griffith, Ron Campbell, and Clark Gilbert met in Salt Lake City with Chad Webb—Administrator of

15 Ibid.


17 Kim B. Clark, interview by author, Salt Lake City, June 16, 2016.
Seminaries and Institutes of Religion. They looked to the Seminaries and Institute program as a partner for the spiritual growth of the students and asked for their help to allow use of institute buildings for the students to gather each week. Webb was “supportive but very careful.” He agreed that S&I had an infrastructure in place that was a worldwide system, including brick and mortar facilities and people in place to supervise Church education in every area of the world. “Structurally we were in place to be really helpful.” Webb’s initial concern was the necessary time commitment from S&I coordinators and support specialists.

This concern rooted from the earliest days of the Perpetual Education Fund (PEF). PEF was originally administered through S&I coordinators and support specialists. These S&I employees were asked to add work to their already busy schedules that in some cases left insufficient time for them to complete their core responsibilities. Webb expressed a desire for BYU-Idaho to bring sufficient people to accomplish the required work to support their program.18 Assured that BYU-Idaho would provide the manpower, Webb gave them his support in proposing a program that would utilize the framework of existing institute buildings. In retrospect, Griffith’s journal entry that night looked to the future: “We have started the first phase of our BYU-I/institute distant site program. The potential for this new program is very big. President Clark described it similar to being on the frontier. We are laying the groundwork for distance education that may change education forever.”19

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18 Chad H. Webb, interview with author, Salt Lake City, June 7, 2016.

19 Griffith, Interview with author, Rexburg, October 30, 2015.
Focus Groups

Pilot sites for distant learning would need a large LDS population, a healthy Institute program, limited impact on existing relationships between the local Institute and other educational institutions, and a full-time Institute director. It was also preferred that the sites be in close proximity to an LDS temple and singles wards. Nine sites were identified for consideration: Gresham, OR; New York, NY; Houston, TX; Las Vegas, NV; Fresno, CA; Denver, CO; Nampa, ID; Tacoma, WA; and Mesa AZ. The three locations with the highest number of enrolled institute students not attending college were selected.

Griffith phoned a friend who was an institute director in Nampa, Idaho and was soon also connected with an institute director in Mesa, Arizona. The third site in Manhattan, New York aligned with a previous suggestion from Clark that they also go east. These three sites were also deliberately selected with hopes to learn from their diverse characteristics. Nampa—a rural farming community, Mesa—a community that was a center of strength for the Church, and Manhattan—an urban, highly immigrant community. Griffith asked each of the three institute directors, “Do you have young adults coming to your institute that are not enrolled at the university?” All three responded with some vigor, “Oh yeah!” Determined to meet with those groups of individuals, Griffith and Gilbert visited each site to conduct focus group sessions in February and March of 2009.

A large number of students attending the first focus group in Nampa revealed a great demand for higher education. In Manhattan, once again the demand exceeded their expectations and hundreds of individuals filled the chapel and cultural hall for that focus group meeting. The demographics at the three focus groups ranged from those already possessing over 30 college credits, to those who had only dreamed of attending college. There was a mix of potential
students who were employed full-time, part-time and jobless. Some had served LDS missions and some had not. There were those who had been life-time members of the Church and others who were recent converts. They also found that roughly 40% of the members in the Queens, New York Stake were undocumented residents in the U.S.\(^{20}\) The groups’ collective attitude about college was positive. It was clear that these students understood the value of an education. When asked “Why are you not enrolled in college?” The top three responses to this question were revealing. They included financial concern, issues regarding lack of self-confidence and hope, and lack of accessibility of higher education due to time or location.

Going in with the assumption that they would be interviewing 18-year-olds, Gilbert and Griffith were astounded that in Manhattan, only about 60% of the room consisted of that younger age group and they “were thrilled that so many priesthood leaders would come and show their support.”\(^{21}\) It soon surprised them to discover that the other 40% that did include many priesthood leaders were not there simply to support the younger populace, but rather they were there because of their own interest in obtaining a post-secondary education. Before leaving New York, Gilbert and Griffith learned that capable individuals over 30 years old, who had missed an earlier opportunity, had a great need to obtain higher education and training. These individuals had felt that education was beyond their reach and it became clear to Gilbert and Griffith how desperately they wanted a BYU-Idaho education.\(^{22}\) These potential students shared optimistic attitudes regarding the possibility of online courses, though they expressed concerns about quality, access to the course instructors, and the feeling of being on their own. It was apparent


\(^{21}\) Clark Gilbert, Interview with author, Rexburg, March 30, 2016.

\(^{22}\) Ibid.
that these groups loved the idea of gathering and associating at the local institute buildings. One concern from these focus groups was that only 25% of them had access to a laptop.  

Gilbert and Griffith began these focus groups with the question, “If our typical BYU-Idaho student can’t come to Rexburg, how can we go to them?” They quickly realized, however, that there was a massive population that would never have come to BYU-Idaho or any other college. Gilbert sensed that there was a fear in the hearts of some that they would never be able to obtain the education they wanted, but that there was also a hope that the Church would bring them a chance that would work for them. Some of them did not perform well academically in high school, and some were not currently eligible for an ecclesiastical endorsement.  

When asked what classes the group would be interested in taking, their response included basic Freshmen courses, and as discussions continued it became apparent that these students needed some bridge courses to jump-start their academic journey. This shifted Gilbert and Griffith’s focus. A realization came that this new initiative is not about reaching out to the world, but rather about reaching down and lifting up—serving the underserved. Their conclusion was that this new program would need to be affordable, build hope and confidence, prepare individuals for a college education, and also make education accessible to individuals over 30 years old.  

Early in the research phases of this initiative, Griffith contacted another friend who was serving as a stake president in Seattle. As Griffith explained to him the early stages of this program and what it would do, the stake president responded, “Every fall there are young adults in Seattle who go to BYU-Idaho, some go to Provo, some go to Washington State University,

23 “Distant Site Pilot Visits.”

24 Griffith, Interview with author, Rexburg, October 30, 2015.
some go to Central Washington. Every fall, young adults leave but in the back of the gym there is a group of young adults who just get left behind. It sounds like what you’re trying to design is for those students.” When Griffith heard this, he recalls that “the Spirit said ‘he is exactly right.’ And so it just totally changed our whole approach.”

After returning from the early focus groups, Griffith recalls meeting a lot of young adults who could not qualify for an ecclesiastical endorsement—an endorsement from a local Church leader declaring a student’s worthiness and willingness to abide by the University’s Honor Code. Such an endorsement is required of all students attending a CES institution of higher education. When discussing the issue with the University president, Clark suggested that perhaps an endorsement would not be necessary for students enrolled in the first year of Pathway. The issue was discussed at length and ultimately the decision was made that there would be no ecclesiastical endorsement required for the first year of the program. This would bless the lives of thousands of individuals and would open up the real possibility of using the program as a ministering tool to bring individuals back to full Church activity.

**Potentially Projected Impacts on BYU-Idaho**

The focus groups confirmed that this pilot had a real sense of potential success. After receiving a request from the BYU-Idaho president’s office, the time had come to consider potential impacts the program could have on BYU-Idaho should it be expanded. Gilbert and Griffith modeled the impact of the distant site pilot with base assumptions on growth over a four-year horizon. Assuming 12 active distant sites, with 20 students starting at each site during each of the three semesters each year, and a 70% matriculation rate to complete a certificate or an

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25 Griffith, Interview with author, Rexburg, October 30, 2015.
associate degree, with a subsequent 70% moving on to receive a bachelor’s degree, the program could have large ramifications for the University. The net impact on BYU-Idaho would be 100,000 student credit hours each year, making the online courses 40% of total BYU-Idaho enrollment. They projected that this would also eventually result in 400 bachelor’s degrees, and 500 additional associate degrees or certificates each year.26

Potential impacts on the University caused administrators to consider the need for a separate admissions application, and the necessity for the registrar’s office to grant certificates, and create transcripts for non-matriculated students. Other implications could end up affecting philanthropic fundraising, scholarships, the need for a tutoring center with asynchronous video tutoring, and curriculum development that would provide a robust offering of various applicable certifications.27

**Academic “Path”**

With Board approval for a pilot of this new education initiative to launch in the Fall of 2009, and additional direction from recent focus groups, Griffith was now tasked with the responsibility to create the program. At the micro-level of this exploratory effort was Griffith, reporting to Clark Gilbert. The macro level of this initiative consisted of Clark’s team known as “Enrollment Enhancement II.”28 This committee included Clark Gilbert, Henry J. Eyring, Ron Campbell, J.D. Griffith, and Betty Oldham. Their understanding of the need for bridge courses led to the development of courses that made up an “Academic Path,” that they began to call

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26 Clark Gilbert, Email Communication, June 11, 2009.

27 Ibid.

28 On internal documents the team is called “Enrollment Enhancement II,” however, the group is referred to as “Enrollment Expansion II” in Christensen and Eyring, *The Innovative University.*
“Academic Start.” Underlying the entire program was religious education, helping people learn how to learn, giving a foundation upon which they can build to obtain more skills and become of value in the marketplace.

In review of their focus groups and visits at the three distant sites, the observation was made that the program should be promoted as a Church program rather than a BYU-Idaho program so that institute directors and ecclesiastical leaders could take greater ownership. Local priesthood leaders had the responsibility of recommending names of members from their local units who could serve as Church Service Missionary couples. These couples held the role of facilitating weekly gatherings in the institute buildings.

Team discussions began to revolve around questions such as, “Do students enroll in any class they want or do we ask them to enroll in a specific class?” They had initially planned to create a one-credit course that would be an introduction to online learning. Also planned were English 101, Communications 201, and Math 108. Later discussions concluded that these courses were true Freshmen courses and that Academic Start would need to be scaled back to offer preparatory bridge courses. By the time the pilot program was implemented, the final courses for Academic Start included GS 120 Life Skills, English 106, which is more of a pre-101 course, and Math 100G—the result of a collaborative effort with LDS Business College.

Academic Start course descriptions describe these three classes as follows:

GS 120 teaches basic life skills that can lead to success in both personal life and academic studies. The three main areas of study are: learning to learn, self-sufficiency, and disciple leadership. The topics studied include study skills, career and academic planning, provident living, budgeting, goal-setting, time


30 During the first semester of the pilot in Fall Semester 2009, the life skills class was broken into two separate classes. It was combined into the GS 120 Life Skills class for Winter Semester 2010 and all Academic Start classes have been consistent ever since.
management, learning to lead by teaching others, and blessing others with what is learned.

ENG 106 teaches basic writing conventions. Topics in this course include: understanding the writing process; writing effective sentences, paragraphs, and short essays; patterns of organization; rhetorical modes and purposes; audience analysis; the composing process; and editing.

MATH 100G is designed to help students recap, learn, and retain the fundamentals of basic mathematics and algebra. Students will gain competency in entry-level college math skills; use Excel spreadsheet software to perform mathematical and financial computations; apply math skills to financial decisions such as loan payments, savings, and budgeting; and discuss provident living topics (e.g., self-reliance, stewardship, and personal finance).31

In the process of selecting courses for Academic Start, the thought was presented by Clark Gilbert of a cohort model where students would enroll together and go through Academic Start as a group—or cohort—for the first year of the program. With a focus on both spiritual and secular education, Gilbert and his team acknowledged that religious education must form the foundation of the program. Students would be enrolled in a 3 credit-hour Academic Start course, while concurrently attending a 2 credit-hour institute course. Initially, Pathway administrators prescribed the specific institute courses students would take, requiring REL 121 and REL 122—both Book of Mormon courses. Because BYU-Idaho’s spring semester does not align as conveniently with other school and institute calendars, during that semester students were required to take the BYU-Idaho online Family Foundations course (later on this course requirement was changed to the Teachings of the Living Prophets course).32


32 After consulting with distant-site institute directors, it was decided that Thursday evenings would be the best night for Academic Start students to meet in the institute buildings in each location.
The Academic Start program would last one year and would be cohort-based, offering students 15 credit hours. The team had once considered the option for students to accelerate the credit load, but decided to maintain the program as a one-year program for every student enrolled. They anticipated that students would apply to BYU-Idaho during the second semester, and that they would be enrolled in institute classes during all three semesters of the Academic Start program.33

In the preliminary focus group discussions, it became clear to Gilbert that a bachelor-centric curriculum would not work for these individuals. They knew they needed to orient the curriculum to be applied right away, and that they needed to have offerings. Henry J. Eyring describes this concern using a Boy Scout metaphor: “We need to have people working on their Tenderfoot, not their Eagle. But they need to know that if they work on their Tenderfoot it will apply to their Eagle.”34

Griffith also expressed initial concern that those who finished Academic Start with its 15 credit hours may not continue to receive an associate degree that required 60 credit hours. An advocate of “small wins,” he suggested that students receive a certificate at the completion of Academic Start, followed by professional certificate at 30 credit hours at which point they would be employable. Griffith’s final report of the focus groups stated—

Many of these students will need to see results early in their academic pursuit. Building confidence will play a key factor in continued success. I believe this can be best accomplished through various degree and certificate options as one pursues the bachelor’s degree. Our approach will be to create paths which lead toward certificates, associates, and eventually a bachelor’s degree.35

33 Griffith, Interview with author, Rexburg, September 16, 2015.
34 Henry J. Eyring, Interview with author, Rexburg, March 29, 2016.
35 “Distant Site Pilot Visits.”
Griffith then went to work collaborating with department chairs across the BYU-Idaho campus to create five certificates.36 Once approved the certificates were added to the University course catalog and were made available only for students who had completed Academic Start. The first certificates had been approved conceptually, but they had not yet been fully developed until sometime in 2010. With only fifty online courses to choose from, creating legitimate and effective certificates that could be obtained exclusively online was difficult. The result was a group of certificates that were “kind of just hodgepodge.” The first five certificates available were: basic accounting, business, administrative, professional sales, and professional writing.

The design objectives at work in the academic path incorporated the idea of using certificates to bridge the gap between the individual cohorts and an associate degree, encouraging individual choice and action, maximizing student marketability, offering campus support and advising, incorporating a model of student leadership, promoting persistence, optimizing time-to-graduation, and ultimately working toward a bachelor’s degree with rapid advancement in mind.

Level one of the academic path included the Academic Start program—a one-year program for non-matriculated students who pass through a reduced application process and advance through 15 credit hours together with a local cohort. Level two of the academic path was a professional certificate, requiring an additional 12 to 15 credits. During that time, program developers proposed that students would enroll in the 2 credit-hour FDREL 200 Family Foundations course and an additional 2 credit-hour institute course. They also suggested that each certificate program would include seminars that would be taught by local members. Level

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36 The first certificates designed were Basic Accounting, Administrative Assistant, Professional Sales, Web Media, and Home and Family Studies. By the time certificate offerings were approved and available to students, only three of the five were included on the list.
three consisted of an associate degree with 60 credit-hours, and level four was a bachelor’s
degree after completing 120 credit-hours and a supervised internship.37

Administrators understood that not all students would choose or even desire to complete
the requirements for a bachelor’s degree. It would never be the program’s purpose to ensure a
bachelor’s degree for every student. Rather, the program existed to help students build academic
and professional confidence while working to develop marketable skills in a household of faith.
Academic Start held as an objective to maximize the marketability of its students at all stages
and ensure valuable ‘off-ramps.’ It was to be an approach that “created paths” that would for
some lead to a bachelor’s degree, and for others toward an associate degree or even professional
certificates. By July 2009, the word “Pathway” had been used to refer to the program, and it
became the official name of the distant site initiative.38

When deciding on tuition for each credit hour, Griffith proposed $99. When asked “why
$99?” his response was, “well, it’s a marketing thing—it’s less than $100.” Fearing that it
sounded “gimmicky,” the price of $95 was selected. On a trip back from interviewing potential
students in Mesa, Griffith noticed that Mesa Community College was offering credits for $72.
Desiring to develop a program that was even more affordable than local options, Clark suggested
the price of $65 per credit hour, which became the tuition price per credit for all students that
would enroll in Academic Start.

One comment that was reiterated time and again early on in the focus groups was that “it
is just too hard to apply for college—it’s cumbersome.” Griffith’s team desired to eliminate this

37 “Enrollment Enhancement II Academic Path.”
38 The first documented reference to the program as “Pathway” is a phone log dated July 15, 2009. (Lynne
Landon, interview with author, Rexburg, March 30, 2016).
as an excuse for not enrolling in college. At the time, the CES application on BeSmart.com was about 18 pages long. As a result, Griffith and his team developed a one-page application. “It was paper and pencil, but it was only one page.”

While contemplating the heavy task of managing sites in New York City, Mesa, AZ and Nampa, ID, the idea came to use service missionaries. At first, it was suggested that the missionary couple instruct the gathering. Griffith recalls being encouraged to create a program that would be scalable—a franchise packet. He felt “inspired” to create a program that you could take anywhere in the world and local missionaries would easily know how to open and run a Pathway site. Realizing worldwide access to service missionaries that could teach would not be scalable, Gilbert’s mind turned to the BYU-Idaho Learning Model. He recommended that they follow the “teach one another” pattern found in the Learning Model, and have the students teach each other rather than using faculty or relying on the missionaries to teach. Pathway then adopted a lead student model where each week, a new Pathway student from the cohort led the gathering discussion. A called missionary couple was present for the gatherings, but all teaching and learning was done by the students themselves.

**Weekly Gathering**

On a visit to BYU-Idaho as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, David A. Bednar said:

> The spirit of gathering brings assurance, encouragement, and a sense of purpose greater than self. At BYU-Idaho you gather…together to learn and to prepare for your mortal and eternal opportunities and responsibilities. You gather together to strengthen each other. You gather together to develop appropriate relationships

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39 Griffith, Interview with author, Rexburg, October 30, 2015.

40 Ibid.
and to create eternal families. You gather together to increase in understanding about the purpose and measure of your creation."

Pathway’s distant site and online learning program has held true to the principle of gathering. Each cohort of at least 10 students—and no more than 30—gathers together once each week, on Thursday evenings, to instruct and learn from each other. This gathering takes place in addition to online coursework. The online courses require approximately 6 to 8 hours of work each week and are administered by an online instructor. As a part of the online experience students engage in dialogue on various topics with other Pathway students throughout the world. The weekly gathering component is seen as a necessary supplement to the online course. At each weekly gathering the service missionary couples begin and end the meeting as well as make any necessary announcements, but all of the teaching and learning are done by Pathway students.

Rather than using a traditional lecture method that is part of most university courses, BYU-Idaho—including these Pathway gatherings—uses a teaching and learning model where lead students engage their classmates in discussions and learning activities. Lead students are given the role of helping other students accept and embrace responsibility for their own learning through specific “steps to success.” Some of these steps include seeking the will of God and guidance of the Holy Ghost, beginning with the end in mind, making the lesson enjoyable and inspiring, and facilitating active and deep learning.

The first year, called Academic Start, required students to enroll in two classes each semester—an institute course and one of three Academic Start courses. All three Academic Start courses are tied to the gathering element and all discussions and activities that make up the

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41 Bednar, “The Spirit and Purpose of Gathering.”

gathering are directly connected to that week’s lesson in the Academic Start course. The role of the lead students during the Life Skills course is greater than during the Math or English courses.

During the Life Skills course, one student each week is selected to be the lead student and will prepare themselves to facilitate a discussion and learning activities with the group about a particular topic assigned that week. These discussions and activities make up the entire gathering experience. The twelve weekly discussion topics during the Life Skills course are: The Learning Model and Honor Code, disciple leadership, lifelong learning, career exploration, decision making and goal setting, time management, information literacy and academic resources, self-reliance, work, personal financial management, family relationships, and giving back. During both the Math and English courses, the lead student will guide the group through the first one or two activities, and then the cohort will break into smaller groups where they will work on course projects and activities or do peer editing.

The spirit of gathering, combined with a learning model that places students in the teaching role, establishes astounding confidence in the hearts of Pathway students. The gathering element of the cohort model has allowed students to feel a sense of family among their peers. They stand up for each other and they fight to build and help each other succeed.43 It has also led to higher student satisfaction and retention.44

Service missionaries facilitated the gathering and kindly reminded students when assignments were overdue and encouraged them to help each other. They saw themselves as resources to help.45 At the end of each gathering, the service missionaries met with the lead

43 Peter Williams, Interview with author, Rexburg, October 30, 2015.
45 Collett, “Pathway Provides Opportunity for a Brighter Future.”
student from that night and gave feedback and reassurance. The lead student assigned for the next gathering discussion was also involved in giving feedback as they began to prepare for their opportunity to facilitate the group’s discussion. The spirit among these cohorts was one of unity and collaboration that will make them legendary for what they will accomplish in their future.46 “The knowledge based society needs students who not only can communicate, but students who can collaborate.”47 Griffith asserts that the Board approved the Pathway program as an effective mode of global education principally because of the gathering element.48 Pathway was to be more than simply enabling global Church members to earn college degrees from BYU-Idaho, but to “export the spiritually transformative experience that students were having in Rexburg and on other Church college campuses.”49

**Heber J. Grant Life Skills**

Historically, Ricks College had offered a College Skills Seminar for about fifty students each summer. The program was intended for young people who could not be “traditionally admitted” to Ricks College, but who showed potential to succeed. Many had lower high school GPAs and lived in circumstances involving divorce, drugs, etc. If the student succeeded in the summer program, they were admitted to the College in the fall. The program’s goals were to provide a second chance, to teach basic skills, introduce a college education, and build

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46 See Eyring, “A Steady Upward Course.”


49 Rob Eaton, “Moving the Blessings of Education Across the World,” unpublished manuscript in author’s possession.
Students were assigned to one of two cohorts and enrolled in four courses through the College’s Academic Learning department. The courses consisted of College Reading (Eng 107), Basic Writing (Eng 106), Algebra (Math 100A), and a Study Skills class. Peer tutors also played a key role in the success of the program. Although the College Skills Seminar was no longer offered, a similar program was organized.\textsuperscript{50}

The Heber J. Grant program began as a campus-based program that sought to provide a student-led organization that would identify and assist individuals in their efforts to overcome disadvantaged backgrounds.\textsuperscript{51} Prior to Clark Gilbert’s arrival to BYU-Idaho, the Grant program consisted of three simple parts: applications, mentors and ambassadors. Students in disadvantaged situations such as a broken-home, first-generation college students, only LDS member in their family, low-income backgrounds, etc. applied to the program to receive a scholarship. If a scholarship was awarded, the student then had access to program mentors and eventually had the opportunity to serve as a program mentor to others. Program ambassadors were responsible for presenting and promoting the program to various groups. The program focused on three key principles to help students rise above their disadvantaged circumstances: self-reliance, stewardship, and replenishment. Heavily involved with the Heber J. Grant program was former BYU-Idaho Honor Code counselor, April Spaulding.

In 2007, Clark Gilbert, who had been working with student leaders in BYU-Idaho’s activities program, encouraged Spaulding to develop and integrate a life skills course into the program’s structure. Utilizing student leaders from the activities program, Gilbert and Spaulding worked with students in the activities program to develop the Heber J. Grant Life Skills course

\textsuperscript{50} Greg Hazard, Email Communication, May 30, 2009.

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Heber J. Grant Student Leadership Manual}, BYU-Idaho, 2.
during the summer of 2007. A council of students selected weekly lesson topics that each fit under one of the three program principles. They then developed weekly lesson structures for each topic. The course model was tested and the Heber J. Grant Life Skills 106 course launched that fall semester as a two credit-hour on-campus course. It has since provided students an opportunity to experience an “unexpected energy and an improved capacity to learn at the collegiate level.”

As Pathway and Academic Start were being developed during the spring and summer of 2009, J.D. Griffith approached Spaulding at the suggestion of Clark Gilbert to discuss the course along with the possibility of developing a Pathway life skills course. Gilbert and Griffith were desirous to use elements of the study and life skills in the Heber J. Grant course in their own efforts to bridge the abilities of Pathway students through the Academic Start program. Spaulding worked with Griffith to create a course model with a student-led curriculum. The Pathway Life Skills course (GS120) adopted key elements of the Heber J. Grant course and adapted them to fit their specific needs.

When the course was launched as part of the Pathway pilot in fall 2009, Spaulding identified three student leaders on campus and assigned them to work with the Pathway students at each of the three pilot sites. Their role was to discuss with the Pathway students the current week’s discussion topic. Student leaders also developed online Pathway resources including sample lesson plans, peer tutoring tools, short video vignettes as well as resources that model how a missionary couple would assist and train a lead student. The first semester or two was


53 April Spaulding, Interview with author, Rexburg, March 29, 2016.
“hard knocks and we just fumbled through it.”\textsuperscript{54} Spaulding and her team of on-campus student leaders met every week with Griffith to discuss what they learned that week and what they could do differently. These discussions were pivotal to the evolution of Pathway gatherings, the use of service missionaries and the Life Skills course. Spaulding eventually joined Pathway full-time to oversee GS120 and also had responsibility for all service missionaries and assisted in overseeing the three pilot sites. With a promising program now designed and ready for implementation, the time had come to pilot.

\textbf{Piloting Three Sites}

During summer 2009, three couples from around the U.S. were called by their local priesthood leaders to serve as Church Service Missionaries and were assigned to assist Pathway. Theirs was the opportunity to pioneer the implementation of a program that one of them felt would “be the rocket ship, taking Church education to the whole world.” Their experience was described as “frustrating,” “exciting,” “challenging,” “faith-trying,” and “wonderful.”\textsuperscript{55} A hopeful, enthusiastic and perhaps hesitant Pathway team launched the three pilot sites during fall 2009 with a total of 50 students enrolled in Pathway. Griffith had all their numbers in his cell phone. He worked as the instructor of one of the initial courses and recalls receiving text messages from students at all hours of the night. Students involved in the pilot were noticeably different from those BYU-Idaho served on its rural Rexburg campus, and of the three pilot sites, Manhattan would perhaps give administrators the best indication of the program’s potential.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.

success in diverse cultures globally. For example, of twenty-two students in Manhattan, only ten
were native English speakers, thirteen had some previous college experience, and their average
age was twenty-six.\textsuperscript{56}

At times, working to get a service missionary couple in place proved more difficult than
imagined. The Manhattan site opened without a designated service missionary couple in place
until a few weeks into the semester.\textsuperscript{57} The successful recommendation, vetting, and calling of
service missionary couples who would serve for 12-24 months depended very much on the
support of local priesthood leaders. When priesthood leaders caught the vision of Pathway and
its potential for the members of their area, securing a service missionary couple was generally
successful. When local leaders struggled to understand Pathway’s purpose and potential, calling
a facilitating missionary couple was arduous.\textsuperscript{58}

During the first semester of the pilot things were “rough.” Griffith and his secretary,
Lynne Landon, were overseeing the pilot’s implementation with the use of a very basic website.
Organization was skeletal and improving, with no training materials for the students or the
missionaries on how the gatherings were to function. Sister Shirley Benjamin served with her
husband Arlen Benjamin as the first missionaries officially called to the Pathway program. She
remembers not receiving instructions on how gatherings were supposed to work until the evening
of their gathering.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{56} Clayton and Eyring, \textit{The Innovative University}, 310.

\textsuperscript{57} The local institute director filled as a site facilitator during the interim few weeks until Elder and Sister
Lunts were called and travelled from their home in Arizona to Manhattan.

\textsuperscript{58} The idea of working with local priesthood leaders to efficiently expand Pathway is addressed in chapter
6.

\textsuperscript{59} Darrington, “A Look Back.”
Griffith and Landon were spread thin. Rolling out the first semester of Pathway, and managing the three distant sites from Rexburg became an overwhelming task. Griffith was constantly travelling between Rexburg and the distant sites. This, while both he and Landon maintained their previous responsibilities in Continuing Education, placing student teachers at various other distant sites. During one trip to Church Headquarters, Griffith had a morning meeting with President Henry B. Eyring, now a member of the Church’s First Presidency, and later that afternoon was found in a small apartment in Salt Lake City cleaning toilets so that a new group of student teachers could move in.60

At the end of the first semester—the Life Skills course—eighteen of the twenty-two Manhattan students had completed the semester’s requirements. This proved that nearly all who desired and willingly worked for success in the program would obtain it. Fifteen Manhattan students enrolled for the second semester. Nine more second-semester students enrolled in East Mesa and Nampa. New challenges were revealed during the second semester as students were now in their first academic course. The Pathway team recognized that more academic advising support was needed. Efforts were made to hire more professional academic advisors and recruit volunteer students in Rexburg who could provide online assistance to Pathway students. These efforts, along with ongoing course refinement, increased retention rates in the pilot sites.61

Just as the pilot was launched in fall 2009, Clark Gilbert was asked to move to Salt Lake City and become the CEO of Deseret Digital Media where he would oversee the developing use

60 Landon, Interview with author, Rexburg, March 29, 2016.

61 Christensen and Eyring, The Innovative University, 311-312. After completing the first-semester Life Skills course, students enrolled in their first academic course (either English or Math). The first cohort to enroll during fall 2009 saw less than 35% of the second-semester students reenroll for the third semester. This rate increased to 87% for those who started the program during fall 2010.
of electronic media. Rob Eaton—a member of the religion faculty—would take Gilbert’s place as associate academic vice-president with oversight of Pathway.  

**Extending the Pilot**

In their travels as members of the Quorum of the Twelve, both Henry B. Eyring and David A. Bednar grew increasingly uncomfortable with the idea that the Church Educational System was chiefly serving students from North America. Reflecting on the source of his insight to entertain a worldwide program, Eyring admitted, “I didn’t have a vision; I had a feeling. I had a feeling, and I got it from a prophet, I didn’t get it from myself.” He recalls how Church President Gordon B. Hinckley would verbally “pound” him saying “Why do you think about the have-nots? Why aren’t you worried about the have-nots? This is a Church of the have-nots.”

Kim B. Clark was attending the Church’s General Conference at the beginning of October 2009 where he was writing notes and personal impressions that he received during the various addresses given. During one of the addresses he wrote the following impression: “We need to extend the pilot.” The next Monday Clark discussed his impressions in a meeting with Fenton Broadhead, Henry J. Eyring, Rob Eaton, and Betty Oldham. Oldham recounts those

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62 Eaton accepted the position of Associate Academic Vice-President for Academic Development only after confirmation that it was an inspired move. Personal communication with a member of the Quorum of the Twelve reassured him, encouraging him to embrace the opportunity to play a key role in “innovation and meeting future needs of education.” (Rob Eaton, Personal Journal, October 12, 2009).


64 Eaton, “A Brief History of Online and Pathway.”

65 Clark, Interview with author.
meetings as “revelatory and most enlightening.” The original plan was to readdress the pilot program with the Board seven months later, in May. However, only one week later, Clark asked that Eaton prepare a presentation he could present to the Board proposing immediate expansion—and he needed the presentation completed that very day. Two days later, on October 14, Clark shared his impressions with Paul V. Johnson—then Commissioner of Education—and with Henry B. Eyring, both of whom suggested he bring the matter before the Executive Committee later that month.

On October 28, when the first semester of Pathway students was approaching the mid-term point of their first semester, Clark entered the Executive Committee meeting with a proposal to expand Pathway by ten sites, with two additional international sites in Puebla, Mexico and Accra, Ghana. With a large LDS population—numbering more than one million—and as a bordering country to the United States, Mexico was a natural fit for the international pilot. The site in Ghana would give Pathway unique international experience and test them in various ways. Without any hard data or information about whether the program works, whether the students attend or even stay or benefit from the program, the proposal to research international expansion was approved by the Board on November 11, 2009.

With high hopes of expansion, Eaton drafted a chart reflecting an ambitious expansion plan that would seemingly usurp all the manpower and resources they had. Broadhead’s reaction to the chart that proposed expansion to Mexico and Ghana was “Where is Brazil?” Clark

66 Betty Oldham, Interview with author, Rexburg, March 29, 2016.

67 President Henry B. Eyring suggested that if they were to go international, the team was correct to look into trying something in Ghana, implying that if they could figure out how to make the program succeed in Ghana it would bless them in other locations. This counsel proved to be visionary. (Eaton, Interview with author, Rexburg, July, 27, 2016).
likewise responded, “This is good, but it’s too slow.” He later added that D&C 88:73 would be their buzzword. Rapid expansion seemed a top priority, and President Henry B. Eyring had recently confirmed both the desire and the need to take education to the world only days before, at the inauguration of the new president of LDS Business College. He stated that change in technology will accelerate and that excellent education will be delivered in new ways and at unprecedentedly low costs. “Education will not be confined to classrooms or even to campuses as we have come to love them…the changes in technology will make it possible to reach any student anywhere in the world.” He continued, “I can’t see the full vision of that yet, but I know it is coming. It will allow us to make changes, both within a campus and across the Church, to extend the blessings of learning, of warm associations, and the influence of the Holy Ghost.”

J.D. Griffith and Rob Eaton travelled to Salt Lake City to meet with President Henry B. Eyring, Elder Robert D. Hales, Elder Costa, and Elder Carmack, who oversaw the Perpetual Education Fund. They also met with Joe J. Christensen who had overseen the international institute program in 1970. As Christensen reflected on his work forty years earlier, it opened their eyes when they realized the planting and germination of Pathway had been in the works for decades. In addition to the 230 institute buildings the Church operated in North America, there were 324 additional institutes operating overseas. Each had a full-time director, and now almost all of them featured access to high-speed Internet.

With Elder Costa, they discussed opportunities to expand into Brazil. On this same visit, Eaton and Griffith also met with Bruce Yerman who oversaw the operations of 17 international

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68 Eaton, Personal Journal, October 24, 2009. D&C 88:73 states that “I the Lord will hasten my work in its time.”

primary and secondary CES schools. They discussed with Yerman the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and other English language assessments. These discussions facilitated later efforts that allowed Pathway to expand internationally with its language courses.

Eaton and Griffith had been debating possible methods by which they could internationally deliver Pathway courses. Their concern was whether to translate the courses and provide them in the students’ native languages, or to offer them exclusively in English. They presented their concerns to President Henry B. Eyring, who began to remark on the possibilities of translation technologies that could become so effective that the value of learning English could become diminished. Then he stopped mid-discussion and said, “No, you teach them English. It will not only bless their lives, but it will bless the Kingdom if they know English.” He continued, “Language looks like a good anchor—not the language itself, but the process that learning language requires. It’s a marvelous introduction into whatever pathway they’ll take. It’s one of the few things that won’t be wasted.” Eyring counseled them to be cautious in how they measured success: “Pick the Lord’s metric. If you choose that, you won’t just succeed, you’ll see miracles.” And he promised that the Lord would direct their efforts if they sought his guidance: “He will run the Church—and your effort—if you’ll let Him. It’ll have to do mostly with this change inside people. God’s in the people-building business.”

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70 Other visits on this occasion included Elder Paul V. Johnson, Chad Webb and Randall Hall—associate administrator of S&I.

71 Pathway Language courses will be discussed in more detail beginning on page 95.

72 Griffith, Interview with author, Rexburg, October 30, 2015.


74 Ibid.
By November, Eaton and Griffith held four key objectives for the following year. They included researching and proposing a second round of pilot sites—including international sites, implement 6 to 12 new domestic sites, prepare to launch the first international sites, and improve the first semester experience. During these first few weeks overseeing the educational pilot, Eaton noted that he had “experienced a steady flow of inspiration,” and felt “immeasurably blessed” serving in this position. The ideas were flooding in so rapidly that he found it hard to keep up with them all.\(^75\)

Eaton and Griffith first visited Mexico City and Puebla, Mexico from January 6-12, 2010. By this point, Pathway had become Griffith’s sole responsibility. Before they arrived in Mexico, they requested to hold a meeting with local priesthood leaders and an Area Seventy, Elder José Pineda. Their meeting included 10 stake presidents and 50 bishops. The two became excited but cautious to follow President Eyring’s counsel not to “set hopes aflame prematurely,” it was after all only exploratory research for a possible pilot program.\(^76\)

The next day they met with the Area Presidency and explained Pathway to them. When they finished, Elder De Hoyos said, “\textit{Cuando empieza}—when do you begin?” The institute director in Mexico City had invited 75 students, hoping that at least 50 would attend a meeting with the Pathway managers—over 100 came. Moving on to Puebla, Mexico the two addressed a “chapel full of stake presidents and bishops” who were enthusiastic about the possibility of Pathway despite the fact that there seemed to be some key differences between bachelor’s degrees offered by BYU-Idaho and those offered in Mexico. The differences could have been

\(^75\) Eaton, Personal Journal, November 15, 2009.

seen to some as worthwhile, since many of the universities in Puebla were reported to be of “inferior quality,” offering diplomas of “limited value.” Some in Mexico had expressed concerns over a Bachelor of University Studies and requested more specialized degrees. Others who were already college graduates expressed interest simply for the opportunity to learn English. Eaton concluded the trip stating in his journal that “our challenge will be to find a way to make sure we get the help to those who need it the most.”

Eaton then met with priesthood leaders and Church members in Brazil where at one site in Sao Paulo, 613 people were in attendance, followed by another 200 in a second meeting at the same location. In their trip to Ghana on January 26, 2010, Eaton and Griffith were greeted by 100 members who expressed interest in enrolling in Pathway. It was clear that international interest for a Church-sponsored education was far from waning. In Africa, few members had computers or affordable Internet access. They discussed international pricing with Elder Joseph Sitati, a member of the Africa West Area Presidency. Realizing the impossibility of charging African Saints $65 per credit hour, they asked Elder Sitati if they could offer Pathway to Church members in Accra at no cost. Elder Sitati’s negative response was accompanied with the comment that the people needed to earn and value their education. His recommendation was that tuition be an affordable stretch. As they later priced worldwide tuition rates, Pathway administrators would now pose the question, “What is an affordable stretch for your members?”

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79 This hearkens back to the underlying concern expressed by nineteenth-century Church leaders: “The Mormon Church, believing that free schools were contrary to individual responsibility, was opposed to schools of free tuition. It did, however, recognize that . . . the cost of education must not become burdensome to the point of keeping youth away from church schools.” (John D. Monnett, “The Mormon Church and its Private School System in Utah: The Emergence of the Academies 1880-1892,” [PhD dissertation, University of Utah, 1984], 164).
to priesthood leaders in every country the program would enter. BYU-Idaho’s fundamental purpose with online learning was to “extend the opportunity for a Church-sponsored higher education to as many students as we can.”

After returning from the site visits, Clark, Eaton and Griffith found themselves in a setting where they were able to meet with President Henry B. Eyring and discuss the program’s future. Griffith recalls preparing a brief report to present to President Eyring updating him on the students’ academic progress. As he began to slide the report across the desk to President Eyring, Eyring slid the paper back and expressed his confidence in their ability as a University to teach students academically. What had Eyring’s real interest was if the program was successfully delivering the Gospel message into the students’ hearts. At that point, Griffith and Eaton modified some of the program’s metrics and began looking at the data differently. Academic Start would differ from other public educational programs because it’s intent and objectives were broader than just taking courses. Its new objectives would be a major and repetitive focus of the Pathway program:

1. Help students get the gospel of Jesus Christ deep into their hearts (Faith)
2. To become lifelong learners (Learning)
3. Support and lead their families in a more productive way. (Family)

Previously Eyring had encouraged Griffith and Eaton to explore ways to take this program to less-fortunate members. Eaton then reported to Eyring that perhaps the program

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81 This hearkens back to a statement made by Kim B. Clark in 2006 when he said of BYU-Idaho, “It’s the combination of skill, ability, and training not only in the classroom but in practical experiences where they really develop their skills in leading and directing. And it happens in an environment where they become disciples of the Savior.” (“A Conversation with Kim B. Clark,” Summit Magazine, Spring 2006, 16-21).

82 J.D. Griffith, Personal communication with the author, August 12, 2016.
would first provide opportunities to those who lived in more developed areas with ready access to technology and then in a few years, consideration could be made for those in places with less infrastructure. President Eyring’s recommendation was to not wait, but to take another look at locations where an institute building had perhaps just been built, where use of technology would be a stretch. Approval to expand to international sites was given on April 14, 2010. Pathway successfully brought the cost of obtaining a higher education within financial reach of families in Ghana and Mexico. Students in Accra and Puebla respectively began classes in January and April 2011.

The program’s international expansion was met with both excitement and anxiety. Henry B. Eyring asserted, “This isn’t about education. It’s education as a way to take the gospel down into kids’ lives. That’s the purpose of every Institute or Church, school. It’s faith-enhancing education.” Surely, the program would “lengthen the reach” of Church education. Eyring added, “We need to learn to help [students] but not too much. By making it too easy to keep going, they’ll never change. You’ve got to find some way to strengthen their capacity. Find some way so the students can see that they’re really getting somewhere—and not by making it easier. Find some ways not to lower the bar, but to help them recognize progress…what you’re on the edge of is huge.” The possibilities of serving students internationally were endless. For example, understanding that some domestic employers would not recognize the professional certificates available to matriculated Pathway students, the feeling was that internationally, many students would become more immediately employable with a certificate. Penetrating international borders

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then required Pathway administrators to develop ways that foreign students could participate in Academic Start courses in the English language.

**Language Courses**

In order for an international student to enroll in Pathway, they would need to have an “intermediate-low” English skill level. This was determined by an English proficiency test. The efficiency of the English test administered to prospective Pathway students was questionable to some, and is constantly being refined, though is still not perfected and its improvement continues to be at the focus of Pathway administrators.\(^8^5\)

Though all students would have some English-speaking ability, Pathway would seek to improve that capability. This led to the development of language courses (L-Courses). These three courses were modeled after the traditional Academic Start courses; however, they were developed for students who were learning English. International as well as foreign-speaking domestic students would enroll in the L-version of the Academic Start courses. These students were also provided a valuable opportunity to improve their English. Whereas other domestic Pathway students would enroll in a 3-credit standard version of the course and were required to simultaneously enroll in a 2-credit religion course through their local institute, international students would enroll in a 5-credit L-version course where the additional 2 credits would assist students in improving their communication—learning and teaching skills in the English language.

\(^8^5\) Griffith, Interview with author, Rexburg, October 30, 2015.
“International rankings favor universities that use English as the main language of instruction and research.” Pathway administrators hoped that students who begin Pathway at an intermediate-low English skill level would end the year of Academic Start at an intermediate-high or advanced-low level, enabling them to transition to a BYU-Idaho online program. International students were also encouraged to enroll in a religion course at their institute, but it would not necessarily be for college credit.

Initial L-courses were being developed by contracted employees of BYU-Hawaii. Later, Rebecca (Cheney) Morris became a key Pathway employee in the development of the L-courses. With her help, the Pathway team overhauled language course development and Morris worked to add language activities to the standard course content, making what is called the L-version of the Academic Start courses. In only a few months, the courses were developed—just in time for implementation with the 19 or so students in Puebla, Mexico during spring semester 2011. The site in Accra, Ghana had already opened in January 2011 using the standard version of the courses. The contents of the L-courses are the same curriculum as their standard counterpart with the exceptions that the L-courses have been simplified for a non-native audience, immersed with related vocabulary exercises and practice, and they include a speaking partner component.

**Speaking Partners**

By September 2010, the Pathway pilot had expanded to thirteen operating sites, one hundred sixty-two students and twenty-six service missionaries. The Pathway team also expanded from two to seven employees. One of these employees, Gene Hayes, would become

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87 Rebecca Morris, Interview with the author, August, 11, 2016.
the manager of international Pathway sites. At the beginning of the international expansion phase, Eaton, Griffith and Hayes were travelling together while Eaton reviewed some Spanish vocabulary. Fluent in Spanish, Hayes helped tutor him a bit along the way. Realizing how much he had learned from Hayes’ tutoring in a 30-minute car ride, Eaton thought of the value this type of experience could have for international Pathway students. He and others worked together with Michael Paul—an internationally specialized faculty member—to propose that international students have a language mentoring opportunity. This notion led to the creation of the speaking partner element of Pathway. All international students would be required to have an English speaking-partner who would Skype with them for 30 minutes each week and simply speak to them in English. The team developed creative ways to provide speaking partners for its growing international student body. Standard Pathway students were required during their second semester English class to become a speaking partner during that semester for an international Pathway student. The team also tapped into on-campus student volunteers, faculty, and Alumni who all contributed thousands of hours every week to the speaking partner program. Over time, the Pathway team had made a way to self-sustain nearly all of its speaking-partner needs by creating a worldwide pool of speaking partners from current Pathway students, though during fall semester help from other volunteers was sometimes necessary.

Removing The “Pilot” Tag

The Pathway team realized that they could not have learned what they needed to learn about Academic Start with only three sites. Though it didn’t seem slow, their initial growth was a necessary slow start so that important lessons could be learned as Pathway was scaled to reach across the globe. After approval was given to form a pilot, those first years—even the first

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88 Morris, Interview with the author, August 11, 2016.
months—were filled with lessons that shaped Pathway’s future. The program evolved into something that did not bear close resemblance to what was proposed. Though it was vaguely connected to the idea of institutes and online learning, what was being done, Clark acknowledged, was “very different than we imagined.”

As Pathway was in its first expansion phase, moving from 3 sites to 10 sites, Griffith sought to hire directors to manage sites. Bryan Justesen was hired in June 2010 and Gene Hayes was hired two months later. Still in its pilot phase, Pathway had eventually expanded to 22 domestic sites and 2 international sites by spring 2011. Students now numbered 236 and despite the relatively small challenges, the data coming in reflected success.

An overwhelming majority of Pathway students surveyed indicated that the Pathway Program inspired them to make improvements in their lives ranging from praying with greater faith to attending Church more regularly to improving personal scripture study and family prayer. Ninety-four percent indicated their testimonies had grown stronger; ninety-six responded that they were applying principles learned in Pathway in their daily lives. Ninety-five percent indicated that their confidence in the Lord’s ability to help them in their lives had increased as a result of their participation in Pathway.

Forty-five percent of students in 2010 had never attended institute prior to Pathway, but were now part of regular gospel discussions in weekly institute classes. This data, along with data reflecting improved quality in BYU-Idaho online courses convinced Clark that Pathway was to now be recognized as an official BYU-Idaho program.

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90 Eaton, “A Brief History of Online and Pathway.”


92 Improved quality was reflected by student surveys during a time when traditional student enrollment in online courses increased about 50% each year (See Eaton, “A Brief History of Online and Pathway).
The Board granted approval in April 2011 for Pathway to remove the pilot tag, however Board approval would still need be to be obtained for additional sites. A few days later, Clark addressed BYU-Idaho faculty members:

Pathway is no longer a pilot program. We now have to think about how we take education to the world. There are people right on this campus who have been brought here to do this work….

At the very heart of this great opportunity is the work you have done in creating great online courses. We need more and we need them better. It will be the foundation for taking the university to many, many more people than we otherwise would….

I believe the Lord is reaching out to us, lifting us as an institution to higher and higher levels of spiritual strength and power, intellectual strength and development, skill and ability to teach and learn in more powerful ways than we’ve ever done before—in fact, than anyone has ever done before.

Elder Nelson, when he was here last year said, in a private moment, “We spend a lot of time and effort in the Church to find people for the missionaries to teach, but that will not be the challenge in the future. Our challenge will be finding enough missionaries to teach all the people who want to be taught.” This place will become part of that work. That light will draw people to this place.93

While reflecting on the creation of Pathway, Clark noted several decades of involvement coming from President Henry B. Eyring:

It’s pretty remarkable to go back to his inaugural address and the 1972 committee that he chaired and other subsequent interactions he’s had with several of the presidents, including most recently in his role in the First Presidency. I’m sure it’s not a coincidence that he was in the First Presidency when we proposed Pathway, because he really shaped it. He’s always had this long-standing sense that there was going to be this important role for education throughout the Church and that the Lord would provide the means whereby these institutions could generate courses and knowledge and be able to distribute it to students throughout the world. And he has really shaped that for, going back now, 40 years. And that’s been a powerful influence and will have lasting consequences for years to come.94

93 Kim B. Clark, BYU-Idaho Faculty Banquet, May 20, 2011, a partial transcript of this meeting is in the author’s possession.

Over Age 30

The age group for Pathway was originally defined by the institute program (18-30). However, in their first focus groups, Griffith learned that there was a huge need and demand for Pathway among those who were older than 30, who had for whatever reason missed an earlier opportunity to continue their education. In Manhattan, Griffith was approached by a 32-year-old bishop from Brooklyn who was working two jobs to support his family. The man said to Griffith, “I need more education. I need this.” It was difficult for Griffith and the others to say no, and yet this same experience happened time and time again.95 This was happening during the great recession and people were losing their jobs or realizing that they could no longer support their families on their current income.

Later, on his first trip to Mexico, Eaton likewise encountered gracious and humble Church members who were thrilled about the possibility of Pathway coming to their native country. Eaton filmed one such young man who was over thirty years old, who acknowledged his own personal need for further education and his inability to afford such. As he expressed it, many people internationally come from small towns, from very humble backgrounds, and will never have the chance to afford a university education. Despite the fact that he would not qualify for the program due to his age, he emotionally expressed heartfelt gratitude for what Pathway would do for other people in his country.96 Experiences like this tugged at the hearts of those who oversaw the program, and they fixed their minds on doing something about it.

95 Kim B. Clark, interview with author, Salt Lake City, June 16, 2016.

96 Eaton had used his cell phone to video tape his interaction with this young man, and was able to take it back to Rexburg where he presented it to faculty members across campus. He claims that the international component of Pathway and the ability to reach out to young fathers like this one did more for them than anything else to get faculty members on board with online learning.
Clark took the idea to the Board to expand the program to include those who were older than 30. Their education would still include religious education, but it would not take place in institute buildings. Students over 30 years old would be required to enroll each semester in—and pay tuition for—a BYU-Idaho online religion course worth 2 credits. This proposal was approved by the Board on May 25, 2011.

Both enrollments and retention rates within this group had far exceeded the team’s expectations. He found that many of the older students are academically prepared and motivated. “They are bringing a richness of experience that will bless the lives of younger BYU-Idaho students with whom they interact within courses online.” Within two years, students from this age group made up 54% of all Pathway students worldwide. A later study would find that this age population was the highest performing group of students enrolled in BYU-Idaho online courses.

Specified religion courses for this age group have varied, and beginning fall semester 2016, all of these Pathway students will enroll online in three of the four new Cornerstone courses across their three semesters in Academic Start. During first semester they will enroll in “The Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon.” Their second and third semesters will include “Jesus Christ and the Everlasting Gospel,” and “The Eternal Family.” During spring semester 2015, all Pathway students over 30 years old who enrolled in the standard course also

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97 Retention estimates from the BYU-Idaho Data Warehouse suggest that within two years of allowing this age group to enroll in Pathway, 87% of those who completed the first semester would go on to enroll in a second semester, and over 90% were generally progressing to the third semester of Academic Start; Hales, Personal communication with author, August 2, 2016.


99 Steve Adams, Personal communication with the author, August 4, 2016.

100 The only Cornerstone class these students are not required to enroll in during Academic Start is “Doctrines of the Restoration.”
began gathering for one hour in association with their online religion course. This change brought into balance both groups of standard Pathway students so that each age group could benefit from peer support through the spirit of gathering.
Kim B. Clark stated that, “BYU-Idaho has a special role in the Church Education System. Its role is to reach broadly to many, many different kinds of students and open up opportunities for them.”¹ As Pathway grew the responsibilities to oversee domestic Pathway sites were divided between Bryan Justesen and April Spaulding. With the increase in the number of service missionaries serving throughout the program, Spaulding’s responsibilities evolved to become the manager of Missionary Support.

With an expanding program, the Pathway team sought to penetrate various locations that served as centers of strength for the LDS population. Experience with this strategy varied greatly. Pathway reached out to a particular priesthood leader on the East Coast of the United States who felt that their area had no use of Pathway because they had an arrangement with Southern Virginia University where any of their youth who wanted to attend could be admitted. Pathway managers then inquired if there were any young adults who were not at church or were wandering without a solid career, and the response was “we have thousands of them.” Their counter response was, “Pathway is for them.”

A contrasting experience involved an area seventy in Boston, Massachusetts. Matthew Eyring—brother to Henry J. Eyring—was serving there and told Gilbert that he did not see Pathway as a college program, but rather as a program to help people who are struggling in his

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stake and region. Eyring became a partner with Pathway in promoting the program and teaching its deeper spiritual purposes.²

When Justesen was hired to help launch the first expansion of ten new domestic sites his job consisted of cold-calling area seventies, stake presidents, institute directors, and recommended service missionary couples and just “hoping and praying that they would quickly catch the vision” of Pathway. Their experience resembled that of a supervisor in England who was sent to globally expand the seminary and institute program. Of his experience in the early 1970s, he commented: “It was a kind of public relations challenge, because you had to go in and convert the members of the Church to the thoughts and ideas of seminary. So you were selling the program, and selling it to the priesthood leaders.”³ Approaching Pathway’s expansion in this way made it seem that Pathway was only a BYU-Idaho educational program. When S&I was expanded, administrators found that support from local priesthood leaders was vital in recruiting students and promoting the program. Employing a similar strategy, Justesen headed the responsibility of working with the area seventies, stake presidents and institute directors, while Spaulding took the role of working with missionaries to ensure they had the necessary support, resources and training.

In the process of expanding to thirteen sites the budding Pathway team learned one of many lessons that would be evident as they labored through the first few phases of Pathway’s development. One of the thirteen sites that was being launched was in Twin Falls, Idaho. The site launched with a supportive stake president and a service missionary couple, however the

² Gilbert, Interview with author, Rexburg, March 29, 2016.

³ Interview with James Wyley Sessions August 12, 1972, Joint Oral History Program of BYU Archives, BYU Alumni Association Emeritus Club and Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, LDS Church Archives MS 15866.
Pathway team had not yet learned much about recruiting students. Enrollment waned at the Twin Falls site, and efforts to recruit enough students to form a cohort collapsed. Recruiting strenuously stretched over eighteen months until a cohort was finally organized at Twin Falls. A few small cohorts existed at that site over the next year or two until the site failed and was closed in 2013.\(^4\) The site reopened in fall 2015 with strong participation. This proved to be an example of the dramatic transformation from Pathway’s early days. Previously, Pathway relied more heavily on institute directors and their personal relationships and contacts for recruiting efforts. This later shifted to a focus on running the program under the guidance and vision of priesthood leaders rather than soliciting the program with cold calls.

Service missionaries played a key role in expanding the program at each individual site. Pathway found students through local priesthood leaders and Church service missionaries. It worked by word of mouth, one by one. Service missionaries made themselves available to attend stake and ward councils, auxiliary trainings, firesides, or other local Church meetings where they could inform members and leaders about the local Pathway site and details related to Pathway and its ability to bless individuals and families. Local ward councils met together to discuss how to minister to individuals in their local wards and might decide that Pathway is a good recommendation for individual ward members, and thus would tap into the power of the Pathway program.\(^5\)

\(^4\) Bryan Justesen, Interview with author, Rexburg, October 30, 2015.

A Self-Selection Model

While a pilot program, whenever new sites were opened, new locations were selected by the Pathway team generally because of their proximity to existing, proven sites. The program was presented to priesthood leaders as an opportunity for individuals to receive a quality, Church-sponsored, higher education at an affordable low cost. Most of Pathway’s contact with locals prior to opening a site was principally done through the institute directors. The local area seventy was usually asked to send an email to the stake presidents in the area about Pathway, but contact with priesthood leaders was limited.

This could not be a University program supported by local Church leaders. If the University sought that approach, Clark knew it would fail. This needed to be a program where the University supported Church leaders in their ministry. “We have the content, we have the program, we have the brand and we have the training, but we don’t know these people. We don’t have the keys. The bishops and stake presidents hold the keys—they receive the revelation for these people. Academic Start works really well where priesthood leaders embrace the program, make it theirs and it becomes part of their ministry.”

Gilbert recalls that when visiting the initial focus group in Mesa, Arizona they lacked proper priesthood support. This particular pilot site struggled and was closed. Eventually other Mesa sites were opened that had strong ecclesiastical and priesthood support which brought the sites, and the Pathway program a great deal of success. This lesson, coupled with the experience

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6 Kim B. Clark, interview with author, Salt Lake City, June 16, 2016.

expanding in Boston with a priesthood leader who really understood Pathway’s mission, taught Gilbert that this program must be ecclesiastically led. “Pathway is inherently a spiritual-based program and when the local priesthood is supporting those students and helping them along, the students do better—they grow more spiritually and they grow more academically.”\(^8\) Although the lesson was learned within the first pilot sites, it was a few years before this lesson became formalized into a strategic policy.

When the program became official, President Kim B. Clark charged the Pathway team to work more efficiently with priesthood leaders. Clark had been currently serving as an area seventy in the Idaho Falls area and was quickly questioned by Griffith and Justesen concerning the possible methods of working with priesthood leaders. Clark explained that if they were to submit a proposal to him regarding Pathway, he could call a stake president from a coordinating council that he oversaw and assign them as an agent stake president over the Pathway program.\(^9\) That agent stake president could then take the lead to educate the other stake presidents about the program and head efforts to recommend and call a service missionary couple.

Clark recognized fall 2012 as a time when everything in Pathway started to change. He observed enrollment increases going from 50 to 3,426 students in just three years. Gone were the days of 15 student applications at each site. The site in San Antonio, Texas opened in 2012 with 174 students registering for courses. Some areas now had 200 students coming from five stakes, whereas the area previously enrolled only 20 students. This change was the result of a process

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\(^8\) Gilbert, Interview with author, Rexburg.

\(^9\) A coordinating council is a council composed of stake presidents in a specific geographic area. The council also includes the local mission president, and it is chaired by an assigned area seventy. These councils are the unit of the church between that of a stake and an area. Multiple stakes make up a coordinating council. Multiple coordinating councils make up a Church area.
that had been a long time in coming. Griffith and Justesen met numerous times with Clark to seek his guidance and instruction on the next steps.

Clark’s guidance led Justesen to create an application that priesthood leaders could submit if they were interested in seeing Pathway open a site in their area. The application provided Justesen with certain pieces of information that he would then put into a worksheet rubric before determining which sites to open. This process became very streamlined and efficient. The application has been modified over time to request specific criteria, and successful Pathway sites have been evaluated so that currently when a site application is received, the rubric can essentially predict the potential success for any given site. This process has uncannily predicted enrollment success. “You can go back in time and look at each semester at a group of sites and you can rank order the score of their application and it aligns almost perfectly with their order by enrollment.”

Enrollment is only one way to measure the success of a site and Pathway managers continue to discuss possible ways to measure the qualitative aspects of a site that move beyond enrollment numbers. Possible qualitative measurements might include the number of students who complete Academic Start, the number of students who matriculate to a BYU-Idaho online program or other local options, employment rates among students who complete Pathway, and even students’ church attendance or personal scripture study, family home evening and family prayer habits. Regardless, this rubric guides decisions regarding which sites to open after an application is received from local priesthood leaders.

One of the key criteria Justesen and his colleagues look at on an application include the number of stakes in the geographic area. Areas where there is a concentration of LDS stakes in a

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10 Justesen, Interview with author, Rexburg.
tighter geographic area make potential for a high-enrolling site. Other areas where the Church
may have several stakes that are much more spread out tend to prove less successful. Another
key indicator of enrollment potential is the stakes’ willingness to provide a service missionary
couple to support the new site. The Pathway site application also looks at the local young single
adult population and even asks local priesthood leaders to submit an implementation plan
suggesting what communication channels or individuals might be involved in their efforts to
make the site successful.

The biggest lesson learned in the pilot phase was that the success of a site depended
entirely upon priesthood engagement. A site with a really good institute director could prove
successful for a time, but the really successful sites had priesthood leaders who were engaged in
the program. A key purpose of the site application helps Pathway managers understand the level
of local priesthood leader engagement.

Areas in the U.S. and Canada can request sites through stake presidents and area
seventies. International sites have to be requested through the area presidency. Internationally, a
site application does not need to be submitted—instead Hayes works directly with the area
presidency to discuss potential sites. Pathway does all of the evaluation on these sites, with the
biggest portion being legal work. Some countries have such stringent legal restrictions that
Pathway has not been able to penetrate those borders. In some nations Pathway would be
required to become a registered educational entity in that country because tuition is charged.

During the fall 2012 semester, Pathway enrollment had increased from 601 students the
previous fall semester to 3,426 students. Synchronously, the number of Pathway service
missionaries increased from 62 to 270. This explosive growth was seen by Pathway managers as
a result of the process of making Pathway a ministering resource for priesthood leaders. Prior to
this growth, Griffith and Justesen knew that they needed to go through priesthood channels if Pathway was going to successfully accomplish its purpose. The question was now how to get priesthood leaders to request Pathway sites in their areas.

Justesen recalls that he and others began researching areas throughout the U.S. and Canada where there was a large concentration of LDS stakes and members that could eventually become strong Pathway sites. After identifying numerous sites, Justesen reached out to priesthood leaders and try to peak their interest and guide them through the application process. This was a transition phase. No longer was Pathway calling local leaders to announce an approved Pathway site that would be opened in their area. Now, Pathway contacted leaders to educate them about the program and promote the site application.

Griffith, Eaton and Justesen gathered a list of twelve good potential sites and divided them up and approached the area seventies in those areas to explain Pathway and spark excitement for the program. “Some of them got excited, but most of them didn’t.” This was a pivotal point where their approach changed. They knew of the potential of each of these areas, but rather than forcing Pathway on those leaders who were not excited about it, they chose to focus efforts on the ones who expressed sincere interest. By approaching the area seventies about the opportunity it allowed them to vet the leaders and find those who really wanted Pathway and would go out and recruit the stake presidents’ support of the program. By the time Pathway was experiencing larger growth in fall 2012, the majority of all Pathway sites were self-selected by priesthood leaders who requested that Pathway be brought to them.

Each time Hayes and Justesen opened a new site, they held a meeting with priesthood leaders in the area and share the vision of Pathway as a resource for leaders to rescue and minister to members in their respective units. In this way, they hope to inspire and motivate the
leaders to send their best service missionaries to facilitate the ongoing site perpetually. When support and drive for Pathway came from local Church leaders it seemed to solve many problems of the past. Recruiting and enrollment were no longer a problem. Priesthood leaders saw Pathway as a tool to rescue and lift individuals in their own neighborhoods. Pathway became an instrument in not only assisting church members in becoming self-reliant, but also in helping them build testimonies of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and habits of righteousness within their own homes.

Self-selected sites also saw greater quality of service missionaries. Soon, as priesthood leaders really caught the vision of Pathway’s potential for their Church members, they began recommending former stake presidents and mission presidents as service missionaries. Individuals who had previously served in these capacities knew how to love young single adults and became extremely engaged in the effort to rescue and assist those who had been “left behind.”

**Site Approval**

As Pathway began to expand into more and more sites, they began working with dozens of area seventies and area presidencies throughout the world. It was apparent that Pathway’s most successful growth was natural growth—as an area produced sufficient interest in the program a new site could be opened. With this understanding of organic growth, Clark went to the Board to seek approval for Pathway to perpetually open additional sites in areas overseen by area seventies or area presidencies where Board approval for other sites has already been given. The request was approved and Pathway sites continued to open at a faster pace. While preparing for fall semester 2015, Pathway sought Board approval for the last time to open a domestic site.
The program has now been rolled out with every area seventy in the U.S. and Canada and has approval from the Board to open additional sites in any of these locations.11

Because Pathway is standardized, it maintains an effective level of consistency and is scalable. Each semester Hayes and Justesen make their best possible projection of Pathway students that will be enrolled so that enough course sections can be prepared with instructors. As of August 2016, Pathway had a site within an hour’s drive of 87% of all of the stakes in the U.S.12 Domestic growth concerning opening sites was expected to level off since the program now has sites in most areas with a critical mass that would sustain a site. Future growth was projected to continue however in the number of students enrolling in the program. Justesen maintains a list of about 40 or 50 potential domestic sites that his area managers have been sitting on. For now, the group is peaking local leaders’ interest in the program.13

Although Pathway expanded relatively quickly in most parts of the world, the program was slower to enter the Church’s Utah areas. Opening sites in Utah was a function that operated differently than the rest of the world. Due to the extremely large LDS population in Utah, Pathway sites in this state were approved through the Presidency of the Seventy.14 Because of the proximity of the stakes in Utah, Church and program administrators feared that if a site opened, individuals from other areas of the state would possibly attend, resulting in

11 Utah is the only exception to this rule.

12 Bryan Justesen, Personal communication with the author, August 10, 2016.

13 Once approval is given and Pathway works to open a new site, Steve Adams—Pathway Research and Evaluation Director—reviewed state regulations prepared by University attorneys to evaluate how Pathway would fit into each state’s regulatory environment.

14 Elder L. Whitney Clayton, assisted by Elder Mervyn Arnold were those assigned to oversee the Church in the three Utah Areas until October 2015 when leadership changes occurred. Elder Craig Christensen, assisted by Elder Michael Ringwood, now oversee the Utah areas.
unpredictably large numbers. This meant that Pathway would have to operate cautiously due to the colossal enrollment potential. When the first sites in Sandy and Taylorsville opened in 2012 and 2013, enrollment applications for the sites numbered in the hundreds.\(^{15}\) Thursday gatherings at the Taylorsville site included ten cohorts—ten classrooms. The Ogden site hosted seventeen cohorts in fall 2015.

Word spread quickly throughout Utah regarding the opportunities Pathway provided. Because penetration into Utah was slow, people were driving from as far as St. George and Logan every week to participate in Pathway. Eventually, other sites opened in Utah, and currently Pathway opened three additional Utah sites for fall semester 2016, bringing the total number of Pathway sites in the State to ten.

**One University**

In April 2013, Clark sought to separate Pathway from the University in a way that would allow it to stand on its own and be prepared “for whatever the Lord had in store for the future.”\(^{16}\) It would become difficult to effectively innovate if the program were fully integrated with the University in every way. This led administrators to determine in what ways they required a connection to the University, and what materials and groups they could develop themselves. Pathway and other elements of the Online Initiative had always maintained some connection to BYU-Idaho even when a degree of separation was desired for successful innovation. Pathway was integrated in its reliance on online courses, instructors and accounting, but formed its own support and advising teams, and even developed its own information system (PATH). With this

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\(^{15}\) 449 applications were received for Taylorsville, and 342 for Sandy (See J.D. Griffith, Pathway Missionary Webcast, October 30, 2013).

\(^{16}\) Bryan Justesen, Interview with author, Rexburg, October 30, 2015.
model the University knew no details about individual Pathway students until they matriculated and transferred their transcript to the University itself.

This decision allowed the Pathway organization to expand very quickly. Students were enrolling in droves. Such accelerated growth was both celebrated and problematic. Once Pathway students matriculated to an online degree program, Pathway was no longer involved in their educational development. Rather, the students were treated like any other BYU-Idaho student as they began enrolling in Foundations courses and working toward a bachelor’s degree. For many students, a curriculum that seemed very applied had suddenly become esoteric and overly academic. Furthermore, many Pathway students were not receiving the training and job skills they needed.

Early on, the University had planned to assist students who completed Academic Start to work toward obtaining professional certificates and an associate degree. This, however, did not happen. The campus did not have an online advising group that was made to assist Pathway students. For the first five years of Pathway, students who matriculated to a BYU-Idaho online degree program were assisted by campus advising. Limited certificates were available to these students, they were not always being invited into the certificate programs, and those that were quickly realized that there were too many pre-requisites and too many required credits in each certificate. In the first six years of Pathway, from 2009 until 2015 only six certificates were awarded to Pathway students. Students worldwide were dropping out of the program with 15 to 30 credit hours and no marketable job skills, other than improved English language skills.17

Once Pathway began to expand, University President Kim Clark believed that in order for BYU-Idaho to achieve its most critical goals of serving students online, it must become a critical

17 Gilbert, Interview with author, Rexburg.
function embodying nearly every part of campus. “BYU-Idaho simply could not extend a
genuine BYU-Idaho experience to students if faculty or administrators saw its online efforts as
the sole province of some kind of separate subsidiary who simply had permission to use the
BYU-Idaho brand and access to some of its resources.”18 The University renewed efforts to
blend Pathway with the University’s campus resulting in the creation of a Faculty Online
Advisory Council that shaped online learning policies.

As is expected with any disruptive innovation, there was some initial resistance and
hesitation by faculty members to support the idea of multiplying the number of online offerings.
Many may have doubted the efficiency and quality of an online course when compared to the
traditional higher-education model—though similar reluctance existed when the Learning Model
was introduced. Professors were now being asked to become involved in the online design of
their department’s courses, and this created tension to be sure. Despite the conflict between many
faculty members and the online initiative, the consecrated spirit of individual faculty members
superseded any hesitation to give less than their all to the project. Though many disagreed and
did not understand the vision of what was happening at BYU-Idaho, faculty faithfully fulfilled
requests to develop online courses.

Steve Adams recalls visiting a particular faculty member’s office while he was on the
phone with a colleague in an open conversation about the online initiative. Adams recalls the
faculty member waving him into the office while expressing his worry that the online initiative
was creating a “shadow university” and voicing his strong concern for the harm it could do to the
University. After hanging up the phone, that same faculty member expressed to Adams his full
commitment to developing the course they had been assigned regardless of his concerns. “I

18 Eaton, “A Brief History of Online and Pathway.”
greatly respected him and other faculty for doing their best to support an initiative they were not sure would benefit the University. It was their consecrated service that made these online programs possible.”19 In the near future, “astounding results” from the online efforts would soften and facilitate a change in their hearts, while the legitimate concerns from faithful faculty members would continue to improve online offerings.20 On-site visits by faculty members to Pathway sites worldwide continued to expand their vision of what was possible for the future of the University in serving all latter-day saints.21

Initially, many faculty members struggled to understand the domestic need for a robust online program, when you could simply build more buildings and increase on-campus enrollment. However, they began to understand as they saw the international element and saw that it wasn’t affordable to have the whole world fly to Rexburg and that there was no way to build enough buildings to house them all. Even in the initial stages before many faculty were fully committed to the success of the program, Eaton notes that the courses some of them helped develop essentially ‘under protest’ were quite impressive—a fact he called “extraordinary.”22

When faculty and others became more convinced that the online program was becoming a permanent fixture of the University, and that Pathway was in deed serving a valuable purpose, the need for initial separation of Pathway from the University subsided and doors were opened to

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19 Steve Adams, Personal communication with the author, August 4, 2016.

20 Ibid.

21 Jason Scott Earl, a member of the BYU-Idaho business faculty returned from a trip to Mexico and stated, “This trip has fundamentally changed how I feel about offering our business program online. I now realize that there are thousands and thousands of prepared students worldwide ready and waiting to be taught. They deserve our very best and I am going to make sure that we do just that.” (See Eaton, “A Brief History of Online and Pathway.”)

greater collaboration and integration with the University.  

Griffith recalls that most solutions to problems faced by Pathway would come in the form of people they would hire, technological advancements, or simple insights through trial and error.

There has been a greater effort in the last year to correct this problem and provide advising for Pathway students that is catered to fit their needs. There has also been a recent emphasis on advising students to simultaneously obtain certificates as they work to complete their degrees. As students complete 15 credit hours, they can receive professional certificates that provide marketable academic credentials, improving a student’s job prospects. These stackable certificates become part of the associate and bachelor’s degree programs and the progress is in the numbers. When Gilbert returned to campus in 2015, fall semester saw that only 7% of international Pathway students were declaring a certificate when they completed Academic Start. During winter semester 2016, that number increased to 37%, and to 57% during spring 2016 semester. Today 93% of all students who recently began Academic Start have already declared a certificate. Similarly, at the beginning of fall semester 2015 only 29 certificates had been awarded in the previous twelve months, and by August 2016 graduation an additional 94 certificates were awarded—nearly approaching the number of certificates awarded in the previous six years combined.

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25 Gilbert, Interview with author, Rexburg; “Pathway Fact Sheet, Fall 2016.” See Figure 2.
In order to make this work, the University set up an online organization at BYU-Idaho that thought only about online students. This organization is chaired by Jon Linford and now assists with the handoff of Pathway students as they extend their education toward an online degree. With this organization in place, Griffith and the Pathway team would again sit in council with online courses and online instruction—both overseen by Linford. For the first time in years, Pathway is no longer separate from the University—and rather, it is separate from campus.\textsuperscript{26} With an online organization in place, with its own vice-president, the University is able to organize around the online organization. This was critical considering that between BYU-Idaho Online students and Pathway students, more than half of the students enrolled in the University were online students.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
During winter semester 2016, 56% of BYU-Idaho’s students were enrolled exclusively in online courses. Gilbert estimates that the number will increase to 75%. With this ratio of online students, and a well-organized online organization, no longer would the University be saying, “This is what we offer on campus—we think it will help you.’ We’re now saying, ‘In Mexico, or Albania, or Russia, or Brazil, these are the needs. These are the career opportunities. How can we give the students an educational experience that will help them get these jobs locally?’” A key element in Pathway’s success are the BYU-Idaho Online academic programs—including certificates and degrees. If the online programs did not exist, Pathway students would have much more limited options when they finish Academic Start. But without Pathway, the online programs would not experience burgeoning enrollment they way they do. The two are symbiotic.

Enhancing Certificate Offerings

In addition to an online organization, Gilbert acknowledged the need for quality certificate offerings. Kendall Peck, now Dean of Online Programs, was assigned solely for the creation of these certificate programs. He counsels with Griffith and with Church Self-Reliance Managers around the world. He enters particular markets and researches demand within each market, and he also counsels with students. The certificate programs created by the University are now a priority and they have begun meeting the needs not only of on-campus students, but also the separate needs of their online students worldwide.

When the programs were introduced globally to Self-Reliance Managers and priesthood leaders, they showed immediate interest in the long-awaited opportunities the programs would

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27 29% were enrolled in Pathway, 20% enrolled in matriculated online degree programs, 4% were on-campus students only enrolled in online courses, and 3% off-campus (off-track) students enrolled online.

provide. What was not obvious to a North American, bachelor-centric, campus-based program was unmistakably clear to professionals and lay ministers around the world. This group worked to build a larger array of certificate programs available to Pathway students. While the Pathway team would still oversee advising of Pathway students through the receipt of their certificates and bachelor’s degrees, the online organization facilitates the campus’ ability to provide a tailor-fit education for those seeking an academic path. Since this change, more Pathway students have matriculated, seeing that something exists for them beyond Academic Start. This has been true domestically, and even more critical internationally.\textsuperscript{29}

Through Pathway, BYU-Idaho began to serve as a “dual-purpose asset in the kingdom.”\textsuperscript{30} On campus, disciple-leaders were being created through foundational, integrated courses and a student leader learning model that promoted learning “by study and also by faith.” This success on-campus was also creating the means, material, ideas and course structure that would allow the University to educate thousands more than would ever come to its campus.

Whereas Pathway students were previously required to enroll in specific religion courses, as Pathway has expanded, administrators have become less prescriptive in their religion course requirements. As of January 1, 2015, all Pathway students between 18-30 years old were given the ability to take all three religion courses through their local institute. This reduces the need to pay tuition for the spring semester religion course. Institute directors also have the liberty of selecting what religion courses will be taken during all three semesters of Academic Start, as

\textsuperscript{29} Gilbert, Interview with author, Rexburg.

\textsuperscript{30} Kim B. Clark as quoted in Eaton, “A Brief History of Online and Pathway.”
long as the course has an equivalent in the BYU-Idaho course catalog. Most institute directors seem to select one of the four cornerstone classes that were introduced in 2015.31

Additionally, when Pathway and BYU-Idaho online students complete eligible institute courses, those credits will now be accepted by BYU-Idaho in fulfillment of the university’s graduation requirements rather than serving as only elective credit.32 Furthermore, these Pathway students who pursue a BYU-Idaho online degree may now take institute courses to satisfy required religion credits, furthering cost savings for each student. Wherever possible, institutes include Pathway students in regularly established classes rather than creating a separation between Pathway students and other institute students. This allows Pathway students a broader experience. S&I also made recent policy exceptions allowing Pathway students who are over the age of 31 to enroll in an institute class where only one institute class is offered and where there are fewer than 30 students enrolled who are between the ages of 18-30.33

PATH

Efforts to streamline the application process included an online application that is offered through internal software called PATH. With great assistance from Pathway Communication & Curriculum Director, Bryan Pope, the Pathway team sought help from the Church’s Information and Communication Services Department (ICS) to design software that would allow priesthood leaders, service missionaries, Pathway students, and administrators to work together. ICS had recently completed initial development on a program for Seminaries and Institutes called WISE.

31 Cornerstone classes include: Jesus Christ and the Everlasting Gospel, Foundations of the Restoration, The Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon, and The Eternal Family.

32 The institute students must enroll in the institute course “for credit” which usually means taking an assessment at the end of the course.

33 Seminaries and Institutes of Religion Policy Change Memorandum, May 2, 2016. This exception is allowed if the number of students over 30 is less than half of the total class enrollment.
They used the same developers who developed WISE to create a platform for Pathway. The software went live in the spring of 2014. Key enhancements were made to the program for fall semester 2015 to assist priesthood leaders, institute directors, and Self-Reliance and PEF personnel. The program now interfaces with BYU-Idaho technology, as well as Church leader technology allowing a symbiotic effort between the three.

PATH allows students a very user-friendly experience when applying to Pathway and authenticates students with their LDS account login information—the same information members use to log into any Church website or software. It also allows service missionaries access to information regarding students’ enrollment and other site-specific administration tools. Local priesthood leaders are also able to use PATH to see a list of every member of their unit who is enrolled in Pathway. The development of PATH as increased efficiency on these levels as well as providing an at-a-glance dashboard and advising profiles specific to all levels of Pathway’s operations that have allowed Pathway to serve thousands of additional students. These integrations into the Church’s leadership programming infrastructure connect priesthood leaders to real-time data so that challenges can be addressed at a local level by leaders who are deeply and personally invested in the success of the students in their respective flocks. 34

Amid the roll-out of PATH, it was decided that Pathway’s website, which had been running for over a year, would be moved to the lds.org domain, causing an unexpected uptick to site visits at lds.org. Holding the website at the Church’s official domain brands the program as an official Church offering, and gives Pathway immediate Church sanction for any who may have seen the program as solely a BYU-Idaho endeavor.

34 “Pathway History,” 7.
Area and Missionary Support Managers

With extraordinary international growth, it became necessary for Hayes and Justesen to hire area managers that could assist them in overseeing the growing number of site areas around the world. As of 2015, Pathway employed four international area managers and five domestic area managers. In addition to these nine managers, Pathway works closely with a relations manager in Brazil who works for the Church’s Self-Reliance Services Department (SRS). This employee’s responsibilities, like others working for SRS, include overseeing administration of the Perpetual Education Fund and working closely with local priesthood leaders and managers of self-reliance centers—often previously known as employment resource centers. This particular SRS employee also has a distinct relationship with Pathway. Though they technically report to SRS, there is a dotted line between them and Pathway’s International Director, Gene Hayes.

With 27 operating Pathway sites in Brazil by fall 2014, administrators found it very costly to travel to Brazil to manage the sites and train site and zone leaders. Unable to hire an employee in Brazil due to heavy regulations, there was a desire to partner with SRS to provide a full-time employee position that would fulfill responsibilities previously assigned to Pathway managers. Approval for this endeavor was given by the Board of Education and the SRS employee was hired in Brazil for fall semester 2015. Clark suggested the need for only five or six of these employees over the next several years.35 Originally, the team envisioned having one Pathway area manager for every ten sites.36 By spring 2016, Pathway managers each had responsibility for between 40 and 52 sites.

35 “Pathway History,” 10.
Area managers work closely with local priesthood leaders to identify current Pathway service missionaries to serve as leaders over a site or a collection of sites—often called zones. Area managers train the missionary leaders who in turn train and manage the responsibilities of new service missionaries in their respective sites or zones. These leader missionaries—site and zone leaders—deliver new missionary onboarding trainings, workshops, and devotionals that inform others about the program. Site leaders are responsible for between 10 and 15 missionary companionships, while zone leaders oversee between 30 and 50 companionships. These leaders work to foster relationships with local Church leaders, coordinate efforts to call and release new service missionaries and find new students. Local church leaders provide the impetus at the local level. Church service missionaries are provided by local Church leadership. They are called by local leaders and trained by employees of the Pathway program. They help run the sites and “give it a local personal touch.”37 This pattern allows the program to minimize operating and travel costs as much of the training is taking place locally by site and zone leaders.

Also assisting service missionaries are a group of seven missionaries in Rexburg who have previously served as Pathway service missionaries. These volunteers spend time on the phone training and vetting the new missionary couples to make sure they are a good fit and that they understand their role. Current missionaries can also go online to receive instructional training regarding the details of their assignment in addition to training they receive from their site or zone leaders.

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Challenges of International Expansion

When focus groups were done in Mexico, Brazil and Ghana, it was apparent that demand for Pathway was high. The BYU brand was aspirational in and of itself, and though an American degree may not be as practical in some nations, the interest to learn English and have a BYU experience was seen by many as a fantastic opportunity. Through the focus groups, it also became evident that the international audience was rather different from potential domestic students. Young adults in foreign lands were showing interest in Pathway as perhaps their only opportunity to receive a quality education. Internationally the need and desire for education intensified, and opportunity and accessibility were key to these students.

Rather than working with area seventies as the domestic team did, Hayes and his area managers worked directly with area presidencies. They found that working with the area presidency was much like working with a CEO. If the area presidency was “on board” they ran the area and could get the area seventies and stake presidents to align. Cooperation of priesthood leaders in foreign countries would be critical to Pathway’s international success. In countries such as Albania, the program received immediate support from local leaders simply because Pathway would educate Albanian citizens without removing them from their homeland. A mission president in Albania informed Pathway representatives that over 90% of Albanian-born missionaries who are called to serve outside of their country never return to live in Albania because they find better opportunities for education and employment outside the country.38

Hayes made it a point never to penetrate a market where the area presidency had not requested a Pathway site. He insists, “Unless the area presidency calls us, we will never go

there." Pathway operates in 12 of the 14 operating areas of the Church. The two areas without a Pathway site are Asia and Asia North. Pathway recently entered the Philippines Area by opening their first site during fall semester 2016. Discussions are currently taking place with area presidencies in both the Asia and Asia North Areas and sites will likely open in those areas soon. In addition to the 14 Church Areas, is a geographical region called the “Middle East North Africa Desk.” Elder Larry Lawrence, who helps oversee that part of the world worked with Hayes throughout 2015 and 2016 seeking the possibility of opening a site in the Middle East. During fall semester 2016 sites opened in both Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

There are numerous complexities when expanding across borders and overseas. Though they also exist domestically, internationally the Church works largely through directors of temporal affairs (DTAs). They work much like a chief operating officer of a company and handle many of the operations and temporal affairs of the Church, while the area presidency focuses more efforts on the ecclesiastical side. International expansion requires close work with the DTA and the Self-Reliance Services managers. In some areas, Pathway was considered to fit so nicely into the educational arm of SRS that, in some instances, Hayes and his area managers were working almost exclusively with them. In addition to these groups, Hayes also needed to involve S&I area directors, regional directors, country area managers, and area coordinators.

Language barriers proved to complicate expansion across cultures. Most communication with stake presidents in the U.S. took place via email. Internationally, Hayes noticed that many, though given a Church email address, did not check the messages, and in many instances did not feel comfortable responding. This reluctance to respond was often rooted in a fear of misspelling

39 Gene Hayes, Interview with author, Rexburg, October 30, 2015.
words or using incorrect grammar, even in their native language. The team also saw constraints surrounding technology and local infrastructure.

Another cultural barrier Hayes faced was the way individual cultures do business with each other. In foreign nations it was obviously far more important to establish a friendly relationship with the priesthood leaders. “You don’t just formally have a meeting and only talk business. You have to develop the relationship first—that is essential.”  

40 Hayes became effective at catering to the Church’s sub-culture in various areas of the world. It seemed that if Pathway were to succeed internationally, it would not happen by taking a cookie-cutter approach to each area.

Within the Pathway team this need to cater Pathway’s roll-out to each individual area caused some turbulence. Some questioned why Hayes would need to develop a different way of doing things in each area. Hayes was convinced, however, that he would not succeed if he took the domestic program, simply translated it, and sent it to Mexico. Hayes translated the presentation that he made when he opened a new site into both Spanish and Portuguese. And if he was giving the presentation in a country where another language was spoken, he had an interpreter. He saw that the program must be customized and personalized for the area it will serve. He asserted:

Just as Pathway had to convince campus that not everything is done on campus—that the processes that are paper-based only work if you walk the form yourself to the front office, that that’s the only way to do it, Pathway started opening up the minds of campus to say we now have a student in Texas or Arizona or New York and we need to serve them differently, I think the Pathway team had to do the same thing and say, “well, we’re no longer in Texas. We’re serving students who are way far away, who are different.” We have to think—while trying to keep the program as close as we can to the standard program—from a marketing

40 Gene Hayes, Interview with author, Rexburg.
perspective—that we cannot just take the poster you created to serve domestic needs, translate it, and send it to Mexico.41

This change of heart happened. Hayes was accompanied on trips to Bogota and Barranquilla, Colombia and Montevideo, Uruguay by Pathway directors, who after seeing the way that the international team established unique relationships with priesthood leaders coupled with a warm embrace, acknowledged that things internationally had to work different than in the domestic sites. Their responses to Hayes were an almost unison, “I understand.”42

International expansion requires significant research as each country has unique government regulations. Pathway performs a full legal and regulatory review for each country where a site is entertained. The Pathway team works closely with Church’s office of general counsel and attorneys at Salt Lake City law firm Kirton McConkie to conduct country-specific research prior to crossing borders with these new international sites. Some area presidencies have requested Pathway sites multiple times, however due to legal, political, social and financial barriers of entry, the program has been put on hold in those countries. Such countries include Bolivia, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Panama, Fiji, Zimbabwe, Armenia, Germany, Malta, Slovakia, Kazakhstan, and Papua New Guinea.43 Some countries require that BYU-Idaho become accredited within the country. This would require, in many instances, local employees and a local business entity thus creating regulatory issues and financial concerns that have heretofore prevented Pathway’s entry into such countries. Where the Church is the entity with local presence and facilities on the ground, entering these countries could put the Church at risk.

41 Gene Hayes, Interview with author, Rexburg.
42 Ibid; Gene Hayes, Personal communication with the author, August 11, 2016.
43 Venezuela has restrictions on payment in U.S. dollars.
Hayes’ team revisits requests in these countries every six months or so, however, until these barriers are removed, the countries remain on hold.\footnote{Companies such as the University of Phoenix tend to ignore the Bolivian regulations and offer courses to citizens of these countries declaring that they are a US company. Pathway could do similarly, however, because we do use the Churches facilities as part of Pathway, the Church then takes on the risk of government involvement. A table detailing the countries where Pathway sites are currently located is included in Appendix 3.}

Steve Adams and Rebecca Morris worked for over a year with individuals from BYU in Provo, BYU-Hawaii, LDS Business College, the Provo Missionary Training Center, and the primary and secondary schools overseen by S&I. The focus of these meetings was to learn how Pathway could improve both assessment and content for Pathway’s English learning system—there was a great desire to create a better English language assessment. Conversations also focused on the possibility of creating a pre-Pathway English learning system.\footnote{The MTC had already developed a written curriculum for teaching English as they had desired to teach missionaries English.} The idea was to develop an English learning system to help students who had no English skills to develop enough English learning that they could qualify and succeed in the Pathway program. Since that time, Bryan Pope became involved in these conversations and the team was able to successfully pursue these goals. This program is under development with BYU-Hawaii and expects to be presented within the coming year.

**Virtual Pathway**

In some countries, legal restraints and long travel distances complicate Pathway operations in existing sites. In Russia, some students travelled two hours, and up to 120 miles each way to gather with their Pathway group. Once they arrived, legal regulations governed how
the chairs could be set up, and the cohort was not allowed to set up a whiteboard in the room.\footnote{Russian regulations reserve education as a state function and do not allow religious organizations the privilege of educating their adherents.} This extreme distance, further complicated by strict government oversight forced Pathway to seek innovative ways to operate Pathway in Russia and various areas of the world.

In April 2014, Pathway received approval from Paul V. Johnson, Commissioner of Church Education, to address these limitations by offering a virtual Pathway pilot. This pilot began running in the Russia Yekaterinburg Mission. Phase one was initiated in September 2014 where ten students gathered via videoconference in a gathering experience similar to all Pathway students. This pilot proved successful in the area, and seven of the ten original students completed Pathway in July 2015 with an average GPA of 3.8.\footnote{“Pathway History,” 12.} By February 2016, eight sites were meeting via virtual gatherings in six eastern European countries including Russia. Now all Russian students are participating in Pathway virtually. Virtual Pathway has also been seen as a revenue stream that could potentially off-set the anticipated plateauing of domestic sites.\footnote{The cost of Pathway for many international students is subsidized by the large number of domestic Pathway students who pay a larger tuition rate. As domestic growth plateaus in coming years, the Virtual Pilot will allow increasing numbers of Pathway students to enroll, thus providing additional tuition revenue for the Program that will help off-set the international subsidies. Pathway Stewardship Review, April 2015.} As of fall 2016, the virtual pilot had expanded to all countries in the Church’s Europe and Europe East Areas where Pathway sites have been approved, as well as to the Caribbean.\footnote{Hayes, Personal communication with the author, August 11, 2016.} Virtual Pilot students across the globe now number 192.\footnote{“Pathway Fact Sheet, Fall 2016.”}
On April 2, 2014 Kim B. Clark announced that Pathway was transitioning from a successful start-up to a large organization. Clark stated that even though Pathway had already experienced significant growth, greater demands and development were on the horizon. At the time, Griffith was working through issues concerning program retention in Ghana. A large number of students were exiting the program. Griffith received an email from Elder LeGrand R. Curtis, President of the Africa West Area. Curtis shared the following concern:

The aspect of the pathway experience that gives us concern is how well the Pathway online educational experience fits the needs of young single adults in West Africa…We enthusiastically support our young people receiving an education, but we are not in a position to say that Pathway is a good option for any particular young single adult, and we do not want involvement by us to signal to any of them that it is. We are not in a good position to assure students that Pathway is a good investment of their time and money.

This communication from the area president of the first international site was sobering to the Pathway team. Though the program had proved successful in serving over 27,000 students, it was impossible to ignore the fact that a BYU-Idaho degree might have little intrinsic value on foreign soil.

Pathway began to pour time and resources into resolving this looming problem. This effort became known internally as “the Curtis effect.” While global student matriculation from Pathway to a BYU-Idaho online degree was 40%, Curtis’ concern centered around the fact that many Ghanaians were dropping out of the online program, leaving them with exhausted financial

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51 Clark also announced that Henry J. Eyring, BYU-Idaho Advancement Vice President, would now oversee operations of Pathway. JD Griffith would now report to Eyring.


credit but no credentials. The problem was multi-faceted. After matriculating into an online
degree program, even though tuition rates for Pathway students remained consistent with those
of Academic Start, the students were no longer gathering on a weekly basis. That loss of peer
support from fellow students and service missionaries proved detrimental. Furthermore,
matriculated students were being advised to enroll in BYU-Idaho Foundations courses including
American Foundations.\(^{54}\)

Also problematic were the cost of textbooks. For the first several years, this became a
real problem for matriculated Pathway students. Having developed a close friendship with one of
the first Pathway students in Ghana, Griffith worked to coach the student as he matriculated into
an online degree program, as did many other international students. Griffith noticed that this
particular student failed to register for his next semester. Griffith looked further into the situation
and discovered that the issue was a $212 textbook that was left unpaid. The real problem was
that the course the textbook was being used for cost only $60—course materials were costing
nearly four times that of the course itself. After a closer look, Griffith discovered that
matriculated Pathway students were dropping out left and right because of this “textbook
problem.”\(^{55}\)

Following this discovery, the University began a joint effort with Pathway and the
University Store to reduce textbook costs. Part one of this joint effort was a textbook subsidy
pilot funding textbook costs for international students through philanthropy efforts. In its first
semester—fall 2014—philanthropy funds had provided course materials for 115 students. These

\(^{54}\) Pope, “Growth and Innovation,” 2. This was the most failed course offered by Pathway (Steve Adams,
personal communication with the author, August 4, 2016).

\(^{55}\) Griffith, Interview with author, Rexburg, October 30, 2015.
students, who were pursuing an online business or computer information technology degree, lived in countries where Pathway tuition was less than $41 per credit-hour. The pilot had plans to provide for all international students during winter semester 2015, and has since reach that goal by expanding to cover most international students in all major programs.

All along, there was a desire in the Online Initiative to move to online textbooks, and at this point BYU-Idaho faculty began seeking more creative ways to use textbooks and one instructor decided to create his own textbook. Excitement over his book that ultimately cost only $11 was short-lived when the cost to ship it to Russian students was $68. Naturally, thoughts have pointed to using online textbooks, but not all textbooks have an online version. Griffith came across an article co-authored by John Hilton III, an assistant professor of religion at BYU who specializes in open educational resources. One article by Hilton concluded that if an organization could create a sustainable business model using open educational resources, the potential savings to students is enormous.56

At the time of Curtis’ message, only 17 percent of the BYU-Idaho bookstore’s textbook offerings were available digitally. The textbook problem was resulting in a Ghanaian dropout rate of 55% after matriculation.57 Griffith used some of Hilton’s research to urge University faculty and administrators to seek an effective solution to this problem. Though the subsidy pilot has proved beneficial, it would require much more funding in the years to come as Pathway continues to grow internationally. The second part of the joint effort that brought about the subsidy pilot will be an effort to charge a consolidated materials fee that will be a percentage of


57 61.9% of these drop-outs had financial holds representing issues with textbook and tuition costs, 38.1% had academic holds possibly reflecting poor performance or other issues related to poor academic advising and course selection (see Pope, “Growth and Innovation,” 2).
tuition for all online students. This new BYU-Idaho Online policy will ensure that all online
courses eliminate the need for a textbook and have instead what they call course materials. Those
materials will be digital and affordable. The University may not realize this goal until fall 2017
or perhaps later, and until then are continuing to subsidize and ship textbooks to students around
the world.58

Academic Advising

Initially, academic advising was provided to students through the University. When
Pathway separated from campus in 2013, they created their own network of academic advisors,
headed by Steve Thomas who had worked previously with the University academic advising
office and the Academic Discovery Center.59 Thomas’ team of Pathway advisors catered their
work to the needs and circumstances of students in varied situations around the world. To be
sure, their service to students was specialized. Advising for on-campus students simply would
not serve Pathway students well—their background and situations oftentimes seemed a world
entirely separate from the traditional on-campus student. Naturally, when Pathway students
matriculated to an online degree program and were handed off to university academic advisors, it
proved problematic.

The team noticed a gap in the hand-off of these matriculating students when they
recognized that many of the students from Ghana had been prematurely exiting the program after
matriculating into a path that would lead to a BYU-Idaho online degree. As would many others,

58 Gilbert, Interview with author, Rexburg.

59 Pathway had also created a team of student advisors who act as mentors to Pathway students across the
globe. The student advisors, however, are pathway employees who take calls from students who have questions
regarding program courses. This group is separate from the program’s advising office, who would contact a student
if they have not yet registered for courses. Student advisors or mentors were overseen by Pathway employee Steve
Thomas, and the number of employed mentors would fluctuate from one semester to the next based on enrollment
needs.
these students from Ghana needed more support than they had been receiving, and they also needed encouragement to seek employable skills through the online certificate programs. Effective academic advising, tailor-fit to their needs would be critical.

When Pathway was rejoined with the University and an Online Development Council was organized, they were charged with the goal to seek ways to make the online experience as similar as possible to the on-campus experience. The Online Development Council reported gaps in the online vs. campus experience in areas such as IT systems, curriculum, advising, and support services. Pathway worked closely with campus academic advising beginning winter semester 2015 to assist them in localizing the course sequencing for Pathway students. Additional advisors and students were hired to help fill in the gap. BYU-Idaho academic advisors and Pathway advisors addressed the complexity of matriculation handoffs and projected related needs based on nuances in completion sequences across various areas. Working together, these groups also reached out to at-risk students and provided country-specific advising solutions.60 Students were advised to seek as their first option a professional certificate that could be completed in only five courses, all of which would count toward a BYU-Idaho bachelor’s or associate degree. A stackable certificate also offered students opportunities to find or improve employment while they continue pursuing additional education.

For example, in November 2014, there were 149 Ghanaian students who had matriculated to a BYU-Idaho online program. Seventy-six of those were registered that semester. Of those registered students 56 had an academic or financial hold. BYU-Idaho Academic Advising had

60 “Pathway History,” 9. In an effort to effectively communicate the matriculation process, Pathway and BYU-Idaho representative, including Steve Thomas, Pathway’s Advising Coordinator, held a worldwide webcast for all Pathway service missionaries on February 10, 2015 where they explained the matriculation process. See http://www.byui.edu/pathway/webcast/archives/feb-10-student-matriculation.
been working closely with each of these students encouraging them to pursue certificates and skill-based courses earlier in their academic career. Most had responded favorably and had enrolled for skill-based courses. Pathway Advising additionally worked to develop proactive strategies that are directed at identifying and engaging at-risk students in order to help them understand their options after they complete Academic Start.

Pathway Advising began to evaluate Ghanaian students who had dropped out to determine the possibility of their becoming academically successful. In some cases, financial holds were removed from their accounts and they continued their education, benefitting from the textbook subsidy. Steve Thomas, Pathway’s advising coordinator noticed that many more matriculated Pathway students were succeeding because of the advising efforts made on campus.

On March 30, 2016 in a Pathway staff meeting, Griffith announced that the University was about to make a change. University academic advising and Pathway advising would then become one entity and it would operate as the University’s Academic Advising office. The office would be managed by Steve Thomas, who had up to that point worked as the Advising Coordinator for Pathway. Thomas, who was both aware of and familiar with the needs of Pathway students would be an effective key in the goal of successfully creating one university where all students could receive academic advising that would fit their needs and ensure individual success.

The team launched a new campaign in winter semester 2016 called “Give Me Five.” The campaign’s aim was meant to encourage and educate students about the benefits of earning a professional certificate along their path to receiving a BYU-Idaho online associate or bachelor’s degree. Each certificate can be received by taking five courses, or approximately 15 credit hours.

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Sustainability

Tuition pricing for Pathway was originally offered at $65 per credit hour domestically, and as little as $10 per credit hour internationally. Pathway administrators set forth a deliberate strategy to keep the domestic price at or below $65 perpetually. However, in spring 2016 pricing was adjusted to $68 per credit hour domestically and some international sites saw a decrease in tuition.62 Domestic Pathway tuition is still very low, but because the $68 per credit rate is higher than break-even, domestic Pathway tuition funds the enrollment of additional international students who pay much less in tuition, contributing to the program’s global sustainability.

Clayton Christensen and Henry J. Eyring’s *The Innovative University*, asserts that the economic advantages of Pathway, with a “modular openness” to multiple paths is reminiscent of a system of community colleges that would feed state universities.

Rather than taking up expensive residence in a distant city and immediately facing the rigors of a bachelor’s degree program, Pathway students could start at home in a low-cost, low-stress academic environment. They could sample college at a price of a few hundred dollars, plus transportation costs for the weekly trip to the local institute building, rather than BYU-Idaho’s all-in first-semester cost of $6,000. If things went well, they had the option of transferring to BYU-Idaho or an unaffiliated community college or other four-year university with which credit articulation agreements would be created. They could also stay with the program long enough to earn a certificate and then to go straight to work with a technical certificate and the advantage of having little or no financial debt.63

Because Pathway utilized an infrastructure that was for the most part preexisting, including student advisors and technology, fixed costs to run the program were minimal. The fixed-costs associated with Pathway are essentially the costs of course development. The courses are rigorous and go through a review process. Courses go through a semester of preparation, a

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62 During fall 2015, tuition in Haiti was $10 per credit hour. In 2016 that cost was lowered to only $7 per credit hour.

63 Christensen and Eyring, *The Innovative University*, 316.
semester of development, and a semester of piloting. That process can get expensive.64 Reducing the burden of those higher costs is the University’s ability to share those costs across all students both on campus and online. Thus, the fixed-cost per course on a per student basis is very, very low. The variable cost consists only of the online faculty that is about the price charged for tuition domestically. Internationally, tuition is charged at a subsidized rate based on the affordability index of each country and coordination with the local area presidency to make the price affordable.

Domestically, and after fixed costs, the program is generally self-sustaining. The pricing for a portion of international students needs some support however, either from campus, additional tithing resources, or through philanthropy fundraising. Considering the operations of Pathway, online programs, and on-campus programs, the way BYU-Idaho keeps costs down on all three is to have all three working in tandem. Pathway is therefore symbiotic to online and online is symbiotic to campus. The only limit to the growth of Pathway seems to be the requirement that Pathway students must be LDS members.

**Members of Other Faiths Pilot**

Beginning in fall 2012, a small number of individuals who were not members of the Church were allowed to enroll in Pathway at its Boston site. Soon after, Pathway administrators allowed the Riverside, California to participate in this Non-LDS Student Pilot. By fall 2014, the two programs enrolled 15 non-LDS students and retained only six of them. Despite a low retention rate, the pilot saw three of those six students make the choice to be baptized and join the Church. All pilot students were required to have close ties to the Church through a family member or close friend. Each participant’s application was individually reviewed by the BYU-

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Idaho President’s Executive Group. In October 2014, approval was requested to extend the pilot to five more domestic sites in order to ascertain the ability of Pathway to bless the lives of non-Latter-day Saints with minimal negative effects on other students.

Approval was sought to expand the pilot to Idaho Falls, ID; Sandy, UT; Auburn, WA; Dallas, TX; and Atlanta, GA. The pilot would be communicated organically through priesthood and missionary channels. Pilot students were held to the same expectations as all Pathway students, including living by BYU-Idaho’s Honor Code and participating in all required religion courses and religious group discussions. Tuition for these students remained consistent with other Pathway students. Forty-seven students enrolled in this pilot during fall 2015. A survey of the students who had thus far participated in the pilot revealed that nearly all of them were satisfied with their experience and would recommend Pathway to other non-LDS students. Two-thirds of them reported stronger faith in Jesus Christ because of Pathway. Overall completion of each semester was lower for non-LDS students, however, total matriculation was not far below the LDS matriculation rate:

Table 1 Fall 2015 Student Retention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NON-LDS</th>
<th>LDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Semester Completion</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Semester Completion</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Semester Completion</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matriculation Rate</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: “Members of Other Faiths Executive Summary,” BYU-Idaho, unpublished document.

During fall 2016 the pilot was employed in thirty existing Pathway sites, with recommendations to expand internationally in future semesters.
**Online Instructors**

According to Clark Gilbert, “One of the hallmarks of a BYU-Idaho education is the personal investment of faculty who unapologetically build their focus on teaching and advising students.”75 Experience has shown that finding online instructors, though more difficult for some disciplines, has simply always worked and that the Lord “calls people to it.”66

The process of hiring online course instructors has been fairly consistent over time. Pathway course instructors are part of a large group of remote online adjunct instructors. One of the greatest sources of exposure that has assisted remote instructors in finding the BYU-Idaho online program has been Deseret Digital Media (KSL.com and DeseretNews.com). In order for BYU-Idaho Online to employ residents in a particular state, there has to have been a business presence established in that state. As of the end of 2015, BYU-Idaho remote instructors were hirable in 21 U.S. states. Administrators desires to be able to hire in all 50 states eventually. Current restraints include navigating regulatory requirements and the time-consuming process of setting up business entities.

In fall 2015, BYU-Idaho employed 1,200 remote adjunct instructors who teach 25-50 students in each course section. Teaching an online course provides instructors a flexible job and the opportunity to contribute to something they believe in. Surveys among BYU-Idaho Online and Pathway instructors reflect their love to blend academic subjects with gospel principles. Dedicated instructors who are committed to the mission of BYU-Idaho and the principles that found Pathway have helped carry the Program through its challenges.

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65 Gilbert, “Inaugural Response.”

Pathway: A Program for the Kingdom

After serving as President of BYU-Idaho for five years, Clark recalled observing members of the Church Board of Education over approximately 60 Board meetings as prophets, seers, and revelators who had caught a vision of Pathway that was far beyond the scope of the current program. He describes the Board’s sentiments of Pathway as a “palpable feeling of inspiration.” Clark was also known to repetitively assert that “Pathway is not for the University—Pathway is for the Kingdom”—a phrase he coined from Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve.67

The Church Educational System historically, if not unsuccessfully, attempted various times to expand secular education to members in various parts of the world. Those attempts failed, yet Pathway has seemed to flourish at an unprecedented pace. A great key to Pathway’s success involves the principle of gathering. The gathering component has proven so successful, that BYU-Idaho administrators are encouraging faculty to seek ways to include a post-Pathway gathering component in the online degree programs. In these gatherings students could gather weekly or monthly with local students in their respective disciplines. These gatherings could be used to network, work on resumes, find mentors, gain internships, or a way to form virtual study groups. It has been suggested that BYU-Idaho faculty or remote adjunct faculty could travel from time to time and hold forums or other meetings within these gatherings.

Though currently unaware of what the gathering component will look like, Gilbert asserts that there will be physical gatherings of Pathway and Online students all over the world. He has urged those involved with Online and Pathway to start asking questions about how the

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University can pioneer new ways and amplify opportunities for local gatherings in centers of strength around the world. In Phoenix and Mexico, a pilot has been launched to gather BYU-Idaho online matriculated students. Phoenix has 1,800 online students and Mexico has 1,100 students and 70 pathway sites. With a population of students equivalent to a small community college, it opens opportunities for the University to employ innovative strategies. In March 2016, online-degree-seeking students in the Phoenix area gathered for the first-ever BYU-Idaho Connections Conference. Over 500 online students, instructors, alumni, Church leaders, Pathway students, missionaries, and guests enjoyed the opportunity to network and hear from University President, Clark Gilbert. University administrators anticipate holding similar events quarterly in various areas of the world where there exists a high concentration of Pathway and online students. Another conference was held in Mexico City in August 2016.

With Pathway and online students rapidly increasing in clustered areas across the globe, BYU-Idaho is becoming a distributed interactive network. The clustering of students gives the University opportunities to do things to serve the students in ways it could not otherwise do. University and Online administrators express determination to further innovative efforts to do all they can to reach out to individuals around the world in a very personalized way. At BYU-Idaho this is called the “Spirit of Ricks.”

“Spirit of Ricks” in Pathway

Pathway’s foundation was built upon three pillars that “reach out to lift up”: 1) Faith—get the gospel down into students’ hearts; 2) Learning—help students become capable learners;

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68 Gilbert, All Employee Meeting, BYU-Idaho, Fall 2015.

and 3) Family Leadership—prepare students to lead and support families. By means of these objectives, Pathway builds students’ confidence in themselves and in the Lord’s ability to help them. It assists them to develop skills, learn doctrines, and strengthen values that enable them to become better parents, providers, citizens, and disciples of Jesus Christ.70

Pathway proved to be reciprocally beneficial to the BYU-Idaho campus. When Kim Clark set out to expand education to students who may never set foot in Rexburg, he effectively applied rules of managing disruptive technological change that brought noticeable benefits to the rural campus. When Gilbert was given the responsibility to apply online technology to off-campus students, it required rethinking the traditional model and produced various learning innovations that increased quality and decreased cost of education for on-campus students. Because of the development of modules that allowed matriculated Pathway students the opportunity to move from a technical certificate to a bachelor’s degree without excess credits, transfer students and on-campus students who changed their majors also benefitted. Other benefits to on-campus students were seen in how they looked to Academic Start to improve the experience of entering Freshman as they arrived in Rexburg.71 In order for Pathway to experience successful growth, it would require “total transformation” of on-campus business processes.72

The early Pathway team was also able to become intimately involved with the pilot students, personally answering their phone calls and text messages into all hours of the night. This allowed them to adapt the program and expeditiously respond to their unforeseen needs.

70 “Pathway History,” 2.
71 Christensen and Eyring, The Innovative University, 318.
When compared to Bateman’s efforts to take BYU to the world using Church meetinghouses, Pathway’s more successful endeavor found its footings in what kind of education they delivered. “The main difference with Pathway was that we created the program after counseling with students and local priesthood leaders rather than just creating a program the university thought the students needed.”

On a 2011 visit to the Boston Pathway site, curriculum development director Peter Williams observed an incredibly diverse group of students meeting in a stake center. They varied in age, nationalities, accents, height and weight. A lead student was standing in the front of a primary room where pictures of latter-day prophets lined the walls like patchwork. As the group worked out algebra problems, a woman came to the board and spent five minutes working out a problem with a few comments from other classmates. They checked the answer and it was wrong. Another student came to the front to tag team, and not one person—even under their breath—mocked or ridiculed anyone in that room. “They figured out the answer together, and that’s the kind of environment you experience in Pathway—students loving, serving and teaching one another in a gospel environment with whatever skills they need to succeed in the world that we live in.”

Clark Gilbert, who became president of BYU-Idaho in 2015 remarks that, “In addition to developing strong academic options, the greatest benefit is perhaps an ecclesiastical one—Pathway students grow spiritually and become more committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Pathway not only helps teach students how to learn and prepare to provide for their families, but

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73 J.D. Griffith as quoted in “Pathway History,” October 29, 2015, unpublished manuscript in author’s possession.

74 Peter Williams, Interview with author, Rexburg, October 30, 2015.
it also helps deepen discipleship.”75 Embedded within the cohort model is the ability to develop a sense of camaraderie where students help each other to succeed. This allows them to receive a true BYU-Idaho experience without visiting campus.76 Kim Clark has said, “When you go into an area and offer people a church-based educational opportunity they have always wanted and at an affordable rate, they begin to feel hope and “to feel God’s love for them in a new way. The people are thrilled and start believing in themselves and gain confidence. Their faith begins to increase and their activity and involvement in their faith grows.” Clark further observed that, “Long term impact of Pathway in a family is enormous—setting examples for children, bringing family closer together and stronger in their faith. They become an asset to their neighborhood and community and also to become a leader in the Church.”77

Weeks after returning to BYU-Idaho, Gilbert and Online Vice-President Jon Linford visited Pathway sites in Ogden, Utah and Mexico. Gilbert described the students’ overwhelming gratitude for Pathway. Gilbert retells of an experience about a young man who at his first Pathway gathering lacked the confidence to continue and announced his intentions to not return. Having later successfully completed Pathway he said, “The whole group rallied around me, and they would not let me fail. I knew if I wasn’t there, I would be letting someone down.”78 The cohort model proved to build confidence in a boy that did not believe in his own abilities.


77 Kim B. Clark interview with Alan Olsen, April 9, 2014.

The focus on encouraging learners to assist others in the learning process roots from a talk given at BYU-Idaho by President Henry B. Eyring. He stated, “It would be easy to look for ways to help learners learn alone, using the wonders of technology. The same technology could give learners the experience of helping others they love to learn with them.”79 With a cohort-based model, a weekly gathering, and the BYU-Idaho Learning Model built into each online course, administrators saw the ability to do more than simply transmit information—they sought to fundamentally change the lives of every student.80

In one of his last interviews in his role as Commissioner of Church Education, Elder Paul V. Johnson reflected on the progress of CES during his service. He said, “Probably the most remarkable thing in the last few years has been the [Pathway] program.”81 The spirit of Pathway lies in what it does for and to the students. Perhaps the greatest part of pathway are the stacks of testimonials that pile the inboxes and desks of Pathway staff members. 82 Seemingly countless are the praises of Pathway, and they originate from instructors, students, family members, priesthood leaders, and service missionaries. It seems that anyone who touches a part of Pathway tends to become electrified with vision and excitement for what it is doing to the hearts and in the lives of the students. Though for some, matriculation is considered a key metric for Pathway’s success, matriculation was never the exact purpose of Pathway. Most important to Pathway has been getting the gospel deep in the students’ hearts.


82 A document containing hundreds of testimonials from Pathway students is in the author’s possession.
At the very first stages of Pathway, President Eyring informed Eaton and Griffith to measure their success with “the Lord’s metric”—a metric that he alluded was tied to building individual people. After a few years of experience with Pathway, Griffith stated that, “Spiritual growth is the most critical metric of success.”

Research among Pathway students suggests that Pathway continues to help get the gospel deep into students’ hearts. Looking back now on the first seven years of Pathway, Griffith contends that, “One of the greatest blessings of working in Pathway over the years has been learning to rely more fully on faith in the Lord in all I do…I quickly came to the realization that the Lord had a plan for educating members of His Church all over the world, and my goal was to simply not get in the way.”

He further adds that, “To me, the joy of reaching the one is what makes the faculty and staff at BYU-Idaho so special.”

Accelerated Growth

One year after the first three Pathway pilot sites opened, Henry B. Eyring visited the BYU-Idaho campus and explained:

Today, many traditional universities and colleges face the need to retrench, and most have been forced to raise the prices they charge to students. One result is an increased need for the relatively low-cost, high-quality education that BYU-Idaho offers. As humble, faithful employees of this institution have heeded prophetic counsel and sought and received inspiration, they have discovered ways to serve more students at an affordable cost. Because of its unique design and consecrated employees, BYU-Idaho can grow to meet the needs of would-be students for whom a college education might otherwise be out of reach.

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Coalescing with the words of Jacob Spori, stating that the seeds of the Bannock Stake Academy would become mighty oaks that will run all over the earth, on September 10, 2014, staff involved in the online initiative, including Pathway, planted a Burr Oak tree to the east side of the Rigby building—Pathway’s first home-office space. Though the tree stretches into the sky, much like Pathway, it is still in its youthful years, and holds within it potential to grow much, much larger.

During fall semester 2015, Pathway reached an enrollment record of 14,983 students. Pathway students and BYU-Idaho online students now currently total 56% of all BYU-Idaho students. The number of students who have participated in Pathway now numbers 56,177 representing 62 countries and 42 U.S. states. Pathway has opened 515 sites around the world. Fifty-two sites opened fall semester 2016—19 domestically and 33 international sites. There is now a Pathway site within one hour of 87% of all stakes domestically. More than eighty-five percent of all Church coordinating councils in the U.S. and Canada have a Pathway site. Including potential future sites that have been identified, those numbers could increase to 92.4% and 99.2% respectively. What began as a small pilot has grown over seven years into a worldwide organization of 34 full-time employees, dozens of part-time employees, 500 online instructors, and a legion of over 2,000 missionaries. Pathway’s growth is led by the ingenuity of an integrated council representing all Pathway teams.

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88 “Pathway Fact Sheet, Fall 2016”; “Pathway Sites, Fall 2016.” The number of Pathway participants listed here excludes repeat students that are listed on the total enrollment numbers on the published Fact Sheet. Pathway has 515 sites that are considered “opened,” however not every site has enrollment during each semester. Pathway fact sheets available at www.pathwaynewsroom.org now report the number of “active” sites with students currently enrolled in a given semester.

89 Pathway Stewardship Review, April 2016.

90 Called the Pathway Exchange Council, it is modeled as an innovative “exchange team.”
Figure 3 Pathway Enrollment Trend by Semester

![Pathway Student Enrollment](image)

Note: “Pathway Fact Sheet, Fall 2016.”

Figure 4 Number of Pathway Sites Opened

![Pathway Sites](image)

Note: “Pathway Fact Sheet, Spring 2016”; Byran Justesen and Gene Hayes, Personal Communication with the author, July 8, 2016. Though 515 sites have been opened, not all sites are currently active with students enrolled.
Growth and potential in Utah is nothing short of explosive. Seven sites have been operating in Utah and three more sites opened in fall semester 2016. Two additional sites are already approved by the Board and are slated to open during winter 2017.91 Utah sites have historically enrolled up to more than 500 students at a single site, and enrollment at most Utah sites consistently outstrips that of every other Pathway site worldwide. The first four Utah sites comprised 15% of all domestic Pathway enrollment.92 It is anticipated that fall 2016 will see Utah enrollment reach up to 2,500 students.93 As Pathway sites continue to open for the over 2 million members in Utah, future growth of Pathway in the state is practically unbounded.

One of the very few limits to Pathway’s growth is the number of service missionaries who accept the call to serve each Pathway cohort. Historically, this has not been a problem, neither does it pose a threat to the future. As Pathway sites have been opened, much like the host of online instructors, thousands of men and women have dashed into the ranks that is the army of Pathway service missionaries (see figure 5). Their eager willingness to sacrifice personal priorities for service to Pathway students is sustaining—even driving much of the program’s growth.

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91 Salt Lake City, Spanish Fork and Heber City opened sites fall 2016. Vernal and Brigham City sites have been approved by the Board and will open January 2017 (Kim B. Clark, interview with author, Salt Lake City, June 16, 2016; John Wilson, Utah/Idaho Pathway Area Manager, Personal Communication with the author, July 8, 2016.

92 Pathway Stewardship Review, April 2015.

93 John Wilson, Personal Communication with the author, July 8, 2016.
Nearly 22,000 of the 41,067 students who have enrolled in Pathway’s one-year Academic Start program through Fall semester 2015, have completed it.\textsuperscript{94} That is a completion rate of 53.4\%.\textsuperscript{95} Approximately 60\% of the first-semester students continue on to the second semester. Retention from the second to the third semester historically increases to approximately 80\%. Attrition among this group of students is often a result of relocation, change in employment, illness, lack of interest, or other life factors. A 2015 survey of non-matriculating students who completed the year of Academic Start reflects some of the reasons students chose not to continue with a BYU-Idaho online degree. Of the students completing in the standard version, 21\% did

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{94} Caleb Trujillo, “175 Pathway Alumni to Graduate from BYU-Idaho,”, July 18, 2016, http://pathwaynewsroom.org/175-pathway-alumni-to-graduate-from-byu-idaho/, accessed September 28, 2016. Statistics for the number of Pathway students to enroll in the program
\item \textsuperscript{95} This number will likely increase as some students have historically not completed the program in three consecutive semesters, but have taken a break due to family and personal circumstances before returning to complete the program at a later date.
\end{itemize}
not matriculate because of the time commitment, 18% because of finances, and 18% due to family circumstances. Students enrolled in the language version of the Pathway courses had similar responses: 27% did not continue due to finances, 22% due to time, and 19% for concerns relating to their family. 96 Approximately 80% of Pathway students who complete the program have matriculated into a BYU-Idaho online program. 97 Of those who have elected not to matriculate online, 4% of the standard version students report matriculating to BYU-Idaho’s campus or another educational institution. Sixteen percent of the non-matriculating L-version students report having matriculated into educational programs elsewhere. Non-matriculated students who responded to the survey reported that between 43% and 48% of them are very likely to eventually matriculate to a BYU-Idaho online program. 98 By fall semester 2016, over 12,000 Pathway students had matriculated to enroll in online programs. Roughly 9% of these students have already been awarded either a certificate or a degree. As of October 2016, Pathway students had been awarded 337 bachelor’s degrees, 590 associate degrees, and 204 certificates—one hundred sixty-nine of the certificates being awarded since December 2015. 99 Attributed to


97 The matriculation rates are based on a three-year window. Students who continue to the next semester of Pathway, or who matriculate any time in a three-year window are included in these statistics. Actual matriculation of Pathway students who immediately matriculate into an online program after completion of Academic Start was 44% during fall semester 2016.


99 Nineteen different bachelor’s degrees have been awarded. The most awarded bachelor’s degrees have historically been: University Studies (70), Business Management (49), and Marriage and Family Studies (38). To date. As of Spring 2016, only three different associate degrees had been awarded (449 of the then 473 were an Associate of General Studies). As of Spring 2016 only seven distinct certificates had been awarded. This will change with a recent and large focus on expanding certificate offerings and encouraging students to seek certificates as they work toward a two or four-year degree. Not all Pathway students choose to matriculate to a BYU-Idaho online degree program—this is reflected in the number of currently awarded degrees. As stated previously, Pathway’s purpose is not to increase enrollment at Church schools, but rather to help individuals find their own path. Other factors affecting the number of degrees awarded to Pathway students include struggles students have had in these first few years of Pathway with a lack of effective student advising. Program administrators are addressing these
Pathway and the BYU-Idaho Online Initiative is the immense reach the University now has across the globe. The total number of students currently affiliated with BYU-Idaho has skyrocketed from just above 17,000 in 2004, to 67,905 during summer 2016.\textsuperscript{100}

Figure 6 Number of Pathway Students Matriculating to BYU-Idaho Online

![Graph](image)

Note: “Pathway Fact Sheet, Spring 2016”; Brad Hales, Personal Communication with the author, July 14, 2016.

Pathway’s growth continues to accelerate at a pace that exhibits no approaching indications of abatement. BYU-Idaho and Pathway have worked to “reinvent undergraduate education and by using “innovation by revelation,” have designed it to fit a global scale.\textsuperscript{101} The problems, and the number of certificates and degrees awarded to matriculated Pathway students is seeing an increase each year.

\textsuperscript{100} The total annual unduplicated headcount includes all on-campus students, online students, and Pathway students. This number increased by 10% in 2016; Brad Hales, Personal communication with the author, August 2, 2016; Hales works as a Data Management Officer for BYU-Idaho.

\textsuperscript{101} Clark, Interview with Charlie Rose, July 29, 2005; Kim B. Clark, “Innovation by Revelation,” BYU-Idaho All-Employee Meeting, October 6, 2011.
home-grown roots of BYU-Idaho have found ways “to move the blessing of education” from its own campus “out into the lives of men and women everywhere.”

**Frugality**

For The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, there is no hope without education, and there is no meaningful, eternal education without the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Interviews with a dozen key figures in Pathway’s uninterrupted creation has reemphasized the fact that although the program has evolved from intelligent and innovative minds and methods, something far greater is moving it. J.D. Griffith, who has been a key player in Pathway since its inception affirms, “There is a force behind this movement that is truly being driven, but is not being driven by me or by BYU-Idaho. We have no agenda regarding growth, we have never set quotas, we have never set goals to hit—the growth has happened naturally.”

This program is a pathway of “learning, hope, commitment, and conversion.” Pathway has taken education to the people in an intimate mode of delivery that opens up opportunities and addresses a need that had not been filled before. It has brought hope to those whom for whatever reason have not felt they had access to a higher education.

At the first focus groups three problems were identified that kept potential students from pursuing a higher education: confidence, cost and access. Quantitatively proven are Pathway’s abilities to provide an accessible, affordable higher education. Creating confidence is more

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102 Eyring, H.B., “Inaugural Response.”

103 Gene Hayes in Pathway Missionary Webcast, October 30, 2013.


105 Kim B. Clark in Pathway Webcast and Q&A, August 18, 2014.
difficult to ascertain. Nonetheless, an exit survey requested of every student as they leave
Pathway reflects that 92% of all Pathway students report increased confidence in their ability to
succeed in college. Furthermore, the average GPA of domestic matriculated Pathway students
has climbed and for the last three years has outperformed all other categories of online students
in equivalent online classes.\(^\text{106}\)

This is classic “Church of Jesus Christ” where you take something relatively
simple and you add to it the Savior, His love, His Spirit, faithful Latter-day Saints
who are willing to work, tithing funds of the Church—which allows you to build
institutes—and you put it all together and add the gospel and it is just amazing.
But if you strip it down, it’s a very simple, straight-forward curriculum. There is a
life skills course to help people learn how to budget, how to study, how to learn,
and how to organize. You teach them math and English, and you do it in the
English language and that’s all it is, but it has an enormous impact on people.\(^\text{107}\)

At the ground breaking of the new BYU-Idaho Center, Elder David A. Bednar stated that,
“As long as intellectual modesty, humility, gratitude, obedience, and frugality continue to
characterize those who learn and serve at BYU–Idaho, then this university will shine forth ever
brighter as a beacon of righteousness and of inspired educational innovation.”\(^\text{108}\) In 2001, Elder
Henry B. Eyring similarly stated that the Lord would allow the School to transition to a four-year
university that would remain rooted in a “foundation of humility.” He later said:

Change brings opportunities for getting better, for seeking inspiration and being
blessed with innovation. That has always been true at this institution, and I was
grateful for the Brethren’s reminder that the pace of change in the Lord’s
kingdom will increase as His return becomes more imminent.


\(^{107}\) Kim B. Clark, interview with author, Salt Lake City, June 16, 2016.

\(^{108}\) The BYU-Idaho Center is the University’s central gathering place consisting of 435,000 square feet
including a multi-use activities center and a 15,000 seat A-class auditorium. Ground was broken for the structure in
October 2006 and it was dedicated in December 2010. David A. Bednar, The Spirit and Purposes of Gathering,
BYU-Idaho Devotional October 31 2006, 10-11.
This institution, where frugality will continue to be a guiding spiritual and temporal principle, has been given by the Lord’s prophets just what it needs to perform its divinely appointed role in His kingdom.

The university is on a steady, upward course that will allow it to play a remarkable role in the Church and the world.109

Frugality is foundational to Pathway’s success. Pathway began by relying on an existing infrastructure of meetinghouses and S&I buildings throughout the world. Pathway also housed their first home office in Rigby Hall—previously a dormitory for male students. As the program staff expanded, more space was needed and the offices were moved in September 2012 to the second floor of Biddulph Hall—another quasi renovated dormitory. Some walls in the building were knocked out, but sinks still remain in many of the offices. In my first visit to Pathway’s headquarter offices I sat around a table with Pathway’s managing director J.D. Griffith on his first day in his “new office.” The cold office space—an old maintenance closet—had just been cleaned out and painted to become an office for the chief Pathway employee. A walk down the hall to the Pathway copy room may have previously resembled a walk to the dormitory showers—because that is exactly what it was. Around the tiled corner of the entrance was a copy machine sitting in the doorway of a shower stall. Pathway’s operations in themselves mirror Henry B. Eyring’s words spoken at BYU-Idaho in 2001. He said, “The expectation is clearly that inspired and frugal people will find ways to bless more students at ever lower cost per student…. Your sacrifice will bring down the blessings of heaven.” Pathway has certainly modeled the pattern of “innovating with scarce resources and treating all they have as if it were the Lord’s.”110

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110 Eyring, H.B., “A Steady Upward Course.”
In 1975, Boyd K. Packer stated that, “The Brethren now have a very firm policy against establishing any new college, any new institutions of higher learning…. As we travel…the plea is ‘Why can’t we have our school? Why can’t we get a college here? Why can’t we have the full program?’ Well, we just do not have the funds. We can’t be establishing institutions of higher learning everywhere in the world. We don’t have the funds…” Over two decades later, Church President Gordon B. Hinckley reaffirmed that, “We are not likely to build other university campuses. We wish that we might build enough to accommodate all who desire to attend. But this is out of the question. They are so terribly expensive.” In January, 2010, Commissioner of Church Education, Paul V. Johnson more recently stated:

We still have some fairly major places to move to, and I think one of the challenges is to find out how best to do that. How do we pull this off with the limited resources that we have? I think we’re probably going to have to do things a little bit differently in some instances in the future than we’re used to. I think one of the challenges is, are we going to be up to that? Are we going to be open enough that we can hang on to the core of what we’re about, but let go of a tradition or two that may get in our way from doing what we need to do?

The Church Educational System has come a long way in providing education to worldwide members of the Church. Resulting from Pathway’s consecrated commitment to frugality and innovation, what was once “out of the question,” for the Church has now become a virtual reality.

In addition to increasing the spirituality and self-reliance of faculty members and students, Pathway is also building and preparing teachers and leaders who do and will yet serve

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in the Church. In an interview with Commissioner Kim B. Clark, he emphasized with some vigor the vast number of Church leaders around the world—including bishops and stake presidents—who for various reasons enroll in Pathway and then use it to benefit both their families and the thousands of people they serve. Pathway it seems, is for the Kingdom.

**Conclusion: A Gateway to the CES Global Education Initiative**

Researching the global expansion of Church education through the Pathway program has been richly enlightening. Throughout the writing process, I was determined to maintain an objective view of Pathway and avoid a hagiographic approach. It has proven all but impossible, however, not to feel the spirit and catch the vision of what this program is, does, and will yet do. There is indeed a heavenly hand that moves this effort at its ever-hastening pace. While researching this project I often wondered why I too had been “called to Pathway” as the topic of this work. Though not all of the reasons are yet clear to me, one became evident while I attended a Pathway staff meeting in March 2016 as part of my research. During the meeting J.D. Griffith referenced a recent “all employee meeting” with Elder Kim B. Clark and something called the “CES Initiative.” After seeing a recording of that employee meeting one specific purpose of my research became clear to me.

At a previous BYU-Idaho all employee meeting during fall semester 2015, President Clark Gilbert said, “The Lord has prepared this place and He has pulled people here who He could use at a time and season for Him to do a great work for the Church—not just for education, but for the Church…. We have not been built for education—we have been built for a worldwide Church.” Church leaders have expressed great confidence in the University, and continue to
express great hope that all who work in conjunction with BYU-Idaho will be willing to see beyond the campus to the needs of a worldwide Church.”¹¹⁴

Pathway has been an instructive model for delivering education across the earth in a framework that can be applied in many settings other than just Academic Start. It has been a test bed for ideas and it has been a teacher. Pathway Academic Start revealed that there is a way to successfully combine online learning with a face-to-face learning component in a way that allows education to be distributed broadly across the world and yet still keep it intimate and low cost. When Clark first arrived at BYU-Idaho he set out three imperatives for the University to increase the quality of education, lower relative costs, and serve more students. Academic Start has shown how to do that on a global size—on any scale.¹¹⁵

In the fall of 2015 Commissioner of Education, Kim B. Clark and the Board of Education discussed how the Church could reach out much more broadly across the Church to offer many more members the kind of educational opportunities that could be provided through CES. In November, a proposal was approved by the Board for the Church Educational System to “seek to provide opportunities for education to the members of the Church wherever the Church is organized.”¹¹⁶ The effort would be called the CES Global Education Initiative.

The initiative, presented by Clark to BYU-Idaho employees in February 2016, would include religious education as a foundational part of every program that it would offer. Offerings would include secondary education, English language instruction, Pathway: Academic Start, Technical/Skills-based certificates, undergraduate degrees and master’s degrees. It is anticipated

¹¹⁴ Clark Gilbert, All Employee Meeting, BYU-Idaho, Fall 2015.

¹¹⁵ Kim B. Clark, interview with author, Salt Lake City, June 16, 2016.

that this initiative would collaborate with Self-Reliance Services and the Perpetual Education Fund to help students gain access to needed education.

The CES Global Education Initiative—hereafter referred to as the Global Initiative—is founded on four guiding principles:

1. Education—the struggle for perfection—is a spiritual experience and is essential for building the kingdom of God and establishing Zion. The inclusion of religious instruction, gathering experiences, and a spiritual focus to online learning will be essential.

2. The Global Education initiative will be a collaborative, system-wide effort, involving all CES institutions. We will partner with Self-Reliance Services, the Missionary Department, and other Church departments as appropriate and will build as much as possible on resources, courses, and programs that already exist.

3. Instruction will be delivered online and in local gathering activities at institutes and chapels. Instruction at local educational providers, including local technical schools, colleges, and universities, combined with religious education at a local institute, is an important part of this initiative.

4. Students will access programs through their local Church units, guided by priesthood leaders, supported by CES and Self-Reliance Services. This pattern ensures that Area Presidents, Area Seventies, stake presidents, and bishops and branch presidents make this initiative part of their ministry. When that happens the work takes place under the direction of priesthood keys.117

The Global Initiative buds out of the existing branches of Pathway. Nearly all those who benefit from the Global Initiative will enter their education through Pathway. Pathway is the gateway to taking advantage of all additional online degree programs offered through the Global Initiative.118 With the implementation of this initiative, the number of Pathway sites and cohorts across the globe will increase dramatically. Pathway has set a precedent that will allow the


118 Unless a student has taken 15 or more credit hours on a Church school campus, the only gate into the online degrees that are a part of the Global Initiative is through Academic Start and Pathway.
Global Initiative to experience unbounded execution. These innovative programs have been actively working to transform the model of education worldwide.

As can be seen throughout this thesis, the Global Initiative has been a long time in coming, and has even been attempted at various times and in varying degrees. The reason BYU-Idaho has come to play such a key role in the implementation of this Global Initiative to take both religious and secular education to every member of the Church roots from its unique place in the Church Educational System. BYU-Idaho’s role in CES matches the role needed to introduce the Global Initiative.\textsuperscript{119} The role is to provide a high-quality post-secondary education at a relatively low cost to a broad range of students. Although it has consistently had a subset of students who were very successful high-performers, Ricks College has always focused on students who were late-bloomers, first-generation college students, students who did not do as well in high school, or students who just wanted a more intimate atmosphere. All of these students showed a lot of potential, but for whatever reason they went to Rexburg. BYU-Idaho students also proved to be a very faithful group who span a wide range of circumstances and often scored lower on their ACT tests.\textsuperscript{120} The whole purpose of BYU-Idaho has been to lead these students to find success as disciple-leaders.

That institution has matured and developed innovative approaches to learning and teaching with a focus on increasing the number of students it could serve, increasing the quality of experience and lowering costs. The University is student-centered, with a desire to prepare disciple-leaders who are prepared for a specific time and season—the last days. Other Church

\textsuperscript{119} Though the Global Education Initiative branches out of Pathway and the BYU-Idaho Online program, all arms of the Church Educational System (BYU-Provo, BYU-Hawaii, BYU-Idaho, LDS Business College, and Seminaries and Institutes) have now been commissioned to take part in the Initiative as it expands to provide educational opportunities to members of the Church wherever the Church is established.

\textsuperscript{120} Clark, Interview with author, Salt Lake City.
universities have a different role in CES and will be utilized in offering various degrees and certificates as part of the Global Initiative, but serve a general purpose separate from that of BYU-Idaho. The Lord has been working on this institution for a very long time. He has held it out for this time and season.\textsuperscript{121} Observing the change that had taken place on the Rexburg campus from 2001 to 2006, a Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities accreditation representative remarked, “This is a miracle. What is happening here in just five years is nothing short of a miracle. We have never seen it before. Someone needs to write the story.”\textsuperscript{122} BYU-Idaho continued to innovate and transform through the Learning Model, Foundations courses, a three semester track system, the online initiative and ultimately Pathway.

The Pathway team seems to shout in unison the idea mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:6-8, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.” Each member of the team is cautiously modest about taking credit for the creation and success of Pathway. They share Eaton’s sentiments when he stated:

We were blessed to have a sense from the outset imparted to us by others and above all, by the Spirit, that we were doing stuff that matters and that we needed to get the Lord’s help to do it right. And that was an incredible blessing to be a part of something that God cared about so much that He would give so much help to accomplish. But it was clear to us that we were just instruments in planting and watering and that God was the one giving the increase. But we prayed and hoped all along that there would be great increase from this, and still think that the best stuff lies ahead.\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{121} Gilbert, All Employee Meeting, BYU-Idaho, Fall 2015.
\textsuperscript{122} Kim B. Clark, President’s Council question and answer session, April 14, 2006, BYU-Idaho in Poulter, “Ricks College Becomes BYU-Idaho,” 168.
\textsuperscript{123} Eaton, Interview with author, July 27, 2016.
Regardless, each individual who has contributed to Pathway’s success had been prepared for their specific roles. This is clearly seen when observing the preparation and contribution of Kim Clark. When he left the Harvard Business School many outside the Church were baffled by his move, while many within the Church may have also thought, “How is the most academically credentialed individual ever to lead a Church university going to Rexburg?” Eaton contends that:

In order for Pathway to have succeeded there needed to be a perfect combination of inspiration and individuals, including Kim Clark who was someone so good, so capable, and [who] exudes this wonderful faith-filled confidence in the Lord. He received inspiration and would act on it, and he had just an unusual amount of confidence in promptings from God and unusual preparation to know things that would allow him to help create this—and Clark Gilbert is not one whit behind him.124

Pathway’s growth continues to accelerate, and considering the probable impact of the Global Initiative, enrollment will continue to spike for years to come—perhaps perpetually. The 1939 statement by Milton Bennion that “the educational program of the church today is a consistent expansion of the theories promulgated by its founders,” is still true today.125 And the words revealed so long ago to the Prophet Joseph Smith to teach of things both in heaven and in earth, and to seek learning by study and also by faith are now becoming a genuine reality for many worldwide Church members—and even non-LDS individuals—as Pathway assists them in finding their own academic path. This program seems destined to continue to flourish. If it continues to progress along its designed course, it will continue to change untold lives and as a result, families will be fortified, faith will flourish, and a people will be prepared. “Pathway is a miracle, it’s just amazing.”126


125 Bennion, “Mormonism and Education,” 2.

126 Kim B. Clark interview with Alan Olsen, April 9, 2014.
Figure 7 Unduplicated Headcount of Students Enrolled on Campus at BYU-Idaho

APPENDIX 2

Figure 8 Indexed Operating Cost Per FTE Student


Total Operating Expenditures per Student (not headcount) FTE in 2000 Constant Dollars. The overall increase since 2000 reflects the costs of adding upper-division courses needed for 60 bachelor’s degrees, labs, seminars, etc. after the transition from Ricks College to BYU-Idaho.
Capital Asset Cost per Student FTE in 2000 Constant Dollars. Cost of capital is calculated by valuing all campus facilities at a replacement cost, applying a standard interest rate of 4.5%, and then applying a depreciation rate over an assumed 50-year life. That number is then divided by the number of FTE students. The spike in 2010 is the result of adding 600,000 sq. ft. of space in the enlarged Manwaring Building and the new BYU-Idaho Center.

# APPENDIX 3

Table 2 Site and Student Numbers by Country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year First Site Opened</th>
<th># of Sites</th>
<th># of Current Students</th>
<th>Total # Completed Pathway**</th>
<th>Total # Matriculated to BYU-I</th>
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<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
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<td>Antigua and Barbuda</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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<td>127</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>49</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>2016 Virtual Pilot</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2016 Virtual Pilot</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>643</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>223</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>231</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>86</td>
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<td>2013</td>
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<td>123</td>
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<td>79</td>
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<td>-</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>2014 2*</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>261</td>
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<td>Estonia</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>56</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>Ghana</td>
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<td>66</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>2016 Virtual Pilot</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>2014 6*</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
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<td>Jamaica</td>
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<td>86</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>-</td>
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</tr>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>2011 80</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>1,231</td>
<td>435</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>2014 5</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>Norway</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>Country</td>
<td>Year</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Russia</td>
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<td>3*</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>136 (including 58 from Virtual pilot)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saint Vincent and the Grenadines</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1*</td>
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<td>Samoa</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Slovenia</td>
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<td>87</td>
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<td>Vanuatu</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* In addition to physical sites, these countries also have students enrolled in the Virtual Pilot.

** These numbers reflect students who have, as of Spring Semester 2016, completed the first year of Pathway or “Academic Start” with at least a D- in each class. The total number reflected in this table varies somewhat with the number reported on the Pathway Fact Sheet for Fall 2016 due to a change in BYU-Idaho’s data tracking system. Because of the changes in data tracking methods, it is difficult to reconcile the numbers between the old and new systems. The country-specific data provided in this table is the most accurate data available from BYU-Idaho.

Note: “Pathway Fact Sheet, Fall 2016”; Brad Hales, personal communication, October 12, 2016, October 26, 2016.