

# Shalom Plan 2021

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## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE INTERVARSITY INSTITUTE

**March 2021**

The last few years have been a turbulent and divisive season on many levels around our country. Perhaps it is then no surprise that the impact has been felt on campus in ways large and small—and painful—among our community of students, faculty and staff. In particular, the public incidents of hate and bigotry last fall made clear we have hit a pivotal point—what non-believers might ironically refer to as a “come to Jesus” moment.

As Christians, the first step in a better way forward is to humbly acknowledge that we have fallen short of where we aspire to be on matters of racial reconciliation and a campus culture of unity through Christ. And it is Christ who is and must be Lord of all. What matters most, then, is not the circumstances we face—but our response to them.

Our *Shalom* Statement was introduced several years ago as a theological affirmation of unity in diversity and as a framework for any necessary corrective action to meet the aspirations set forth in the biblical concept of *shalom*. Jesus is our peace, our *shalom*. By grace and faith, fallen humanity is reconciled to God through the sacrificial and completed work of Christ, who died on the cross as our propitiation and substitute and having reconciled believers to God, we are each also reconciled to each other (Ephesians 2:11–22). By God’s grace and pursuant to his command, all followers of Christ are to love the saints and seek *shalom*, which is Gordon’s commitment and strong desire.

The central essence of *shalom* for Gordon is defined as “the right ordering of relationships and actions resulting in the affirmation of human dignity and the flourishing of community.” Creating a statement formally approved by the Board of Trustees was an important initial step intended to help shape this understanding on campus, as well as affirm the value of all individual members of our community as image-bearers of God.

It is also true that the College has taken other constructive steps forward in the last six years in manifesting this commitment in practice, not just in principle. We are pleased that the Lord has drawn more people of color into the College's leadership (including the Board of Trustees and administrative leadership) as well as among student leadership roles (Gordon College Student Association, Presidential Fellows, athletics and honors programs). We have also added more support for ALANA and student organizations, including the formation of a Multicultural Initiatives Office (MIO), and institutional support for student-led initiatives like AFRO Hamwe. These have been the right steps, but we remain far from the finish line.

The plan that follows is intended as a more complete and Christ-centered approach to truly "right order" attitudes, actions and outcomes that can undergird the primary mission of the College. It must further the daily (and preeminent) work we do to educate, prepare and shape the Christian character of our students, so that they can—in turn—be a leavening influence in the organizations, communities and churches worldwide where they will be called to serve and to lead as graduates of Gordon.

We must be clear that this endeavor at Gordon College is not about implementing theories or touting philosophies. It is about living our Christian theology. It is about holding ourselves and each other accountable for doing the right thing by each other and for each other—each and every day. The imperative of this plan is to provide concrete steps behind our moral conviction. At the most basic level, our ability to create a culture of *shalom* for the Gordon community ultimately comes down to individual choice—are we each willing to hold to a standard that benefits the larger community as a whole? Are we truly willing to treat each other as we ourselves want to be treated?

We are appreciative and indebted to the prayerful partnership and seasoned guidance provided by the InterVarsity Institute in identifying the desired outcomes of this plan and in developing the pragmatic steps throughout 2021 needed to put the ideals into practice.

This is an effort through which we must constructively channel our aspirations into desired actions and beneficial outcomes which can be measured, monitored, cultivated and ultimately

codified not only over the months ahead, but in the years beyond. It will require our shared understanding, our shared commitments and our shared resolve.

May we begin anew and start now.



**Herman Smith Jr. '70**  
Chair, Board of Trustees



**D. Michael Lindsay**  
President

## Recommendations from the InterVarsity Institute: General Shalom

[Note that our research and interactions at Gordon College have uncovered a variety of biblical views and personal opinions regarding *shalom* and its application to society. This first section includes the InterVarsity Institute's (IVI) views and beliefs, and frame the recommendations of this plan.]

Throughout Scripture, *shalom* is always a result of right relationship with God, which is ultimately realized in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Right relationships between people, ones that include healing, wholeness, justice, equity and tranquility, stem from this reconciliation to God the Father through Christ. But first and foremost, we are reconciled to God through the Jesus Christ, and we love because he first loved us.

*Shalom* (שלום in Hebrew, ειρήνη/eirene in Greek, “peace” in English) occurs 237 times in the Old Testament and 184 times in the New Testament. Besides being translated as “peace,” *shalom* also connotes how people are doing physically and materially—the state of their body, mind and soul.

In Genesis 37:14, Israel sends his son Joseph to check on the *shalom* of his brothers and of their flocks. *Shalom* also connotes how well groups of people are relating to other groups. In Isaiah 32:16–17, the prophet writes, “Then justice (*mispat*) will dwell in the wilderness / And righteousness abide in the fruit of the field / The effect of righteousness will be *shalom* / And the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.” When the Bible speaks of groups relating to groups well, it uses the Hebrew word *mispat*, translated as *justice*.

The existence of *shalom* at creation is summarized at the end of the first chapter of Genesis 1: “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). God has made all of creation perfect, and creation has a right ordering of relationships: God’s relationships with humans, humans’ relationships with one another and humans’ relationship with the land.

It is in the third chapter of Genesis, that *shalom* is broken between God and humans, between Adam and Eve, and between humans and the land. It is so broken that in the very next chapter, a brother murders a brother.

Yet throughout the rest of Scripture, God demonstrates his commitment to restoring *shalom*. To accomplish this, God sends his only son Jesus Christ, the Prince of *Shalom*. Through his perfect life, his atoning death on the cross and subsequent resurrection from the dead, Christ reconciles to God the Father those who place their faith in him, thereby replacing judgment and enmity with peace. This newfound peace with God likewise replaces enmity and strife between his followers with peace between one another, as we are now a new people “in Christ.” Indeed, as the Apostle Paul notes, Christ has already “destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility” in order “to create in himself one new humanity” out of those who had formerly been enemies (Ephesians 2:14–15). The result is that “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female, for you are all one in Christ” (Galatians 3:28). Among believers, Christ has destroyed once and for all the power of every earthly barrier, releasing the power of a Spirit-infused unity and an ethic of mutual love and forgiveness. By extension, God calls Christians to be agents of *shalom* to the rest of the world. By the power of God’s Spirit, we are to cultivate peace between one another and between us and the land (Jeremiah 29:7; Matthew 5:9). We know that the justice and conciliation we experience on earth is not the full, biblical vision of *shalom* that will occur in the new heaven and the new earth as mentioned in Revelation 21. Nevertheless, throughout Scripture, the faithful are admonished to pursue what we might regard as a proximate view of *shalom*, one in which brothers and sisters seek the peace and prosperity of the communities in which God has placed us, as we are admonished in Jeremiah 29. It is in that spirit that Gordon College pursues *shalom* on campus, in New England and across America, and even to the ends of the earth. In the light of the unity we are called to as fellow believers in Christ, Gordon College’s *Shalom* Statement underscores *shalom* as “a right ordering of relationships and actions resulting in the affirmation of human dignity and the flourishing of community.” This understanding is imperative, especially given all that is happening in the wider society. We must remember that for believers of Christ, *all* of our differences (race, ethnicity, gender, to name a few) are being transformed by the power of the

life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—all are under Christ's lordship and are in the process of being redeemed by the Holy Spirit. This launches an entirely different framework and ethic for understanding and reconciliation, both personally and communally, that is dependent upon Christ's redemptive work rather than by our own merits. While understanding and sensitivity are important in this new framework, repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation are foregone conclusions; otherwise, we are no longer a new people in Christ, only "redeemed" individuals who remain in enmity with one another.

From its founding, the United States has sought to "form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, [and] promote the general welfare . . ." arguably, a vision of *shalom*. At times, the U.S. has pursued this vision well; yet at other times, our country has miserably failed and fallen away. In 2021, our nation is experiencing very challenging divides—racial/ethnic, social and political to just name a few.

These same divides exist at Gordon. We, the InterVarsity Institute, encourage Gordon to continue to look to Jesus, the Prince of Peace, to rightly order *all* of your relationships and to help you to affirm the dignity of all humans and the flourishing of your community, a community with all of its ethnic, racial, social and political diversity. Embodying true *shalom* will require mutual sensitivity, listening spirits, efforts to understand one another's needs, humility towards one another, repentance from transgressions and injustices, and forgiveness—accompanied with reallocation of resources and other *shalom*-related organizational and systemic changes. It will also require pursuing civil and life-affirming conversations—ones that refrain from stereotyping and affirm a Christ-centered identity that is being transformed by Christ's reconciling work.

Although always walking with *shalom* is impossible this side of heaven, God blesses those who pursue it (Matthew 5:9). As you learn to better listen to one another, to understand one another, to humbly forgive and reconcile with one another, to actively serve one another, to work with some of our tools to aid you on the path (for example, help the Gordon community work toward shared understanding on terms like race, biblical justice and intercultural competency, while

respecting a diversity of belief in the exact way the College ought to pursue each of these; develop rules and prompts for better conversations among students; change some of your systems to better promote biblical justice), and as you experience the unction and power of the Holy Spirit, we believe that Gordon will experience a renewed vibrancy, energy, productivity . . . and *shalom*.

To God be the glory! Building on these considerations and informed by extensive research and work we conducted among the Gordon community over the last three months, we offer a set of recommendations for the Gordon campus to help the College move forward in their desire to live more fully into the vision laid out in Gordon's Statement of *Shalom*.

### **We Recommend that Gordon Engage in More Foundational *Shalom* Work**

*Gordon's foundational Shalom Statement has been key to bring guidance and direction to Gordon's evolving and ever-growing value for shalom. This reflects the legacy of A .J. Gordon, articulated in his vision of "preparing the people of God for the work of God." His vision exemplifies the values of Imago Dei (people made in the image of God) and Missio Dei (people engaged in the mission/sending of God). As Gordon's commitments deepen and broaden, there is a need for greater clarity and definition of shalom. Toward this end, we suggest the following:*

- Conduct additional Gordon Grows sessions in 2021 (started in February) that help faculty and staff better understand the biblical and theological foundation for Gordon's approach to *shalom* and to help campus stakeholders embody the love of God and the love of neighbor in their respective offices and departments.
- Write and facilitate Bible studies about *shalom* (IVI can work with the Biblical Studies and Christian Ministries Department and the Chapel Office staff on this, along with others).
- Invite speakers to present at various venues to help Gordon better articulate a shared understanding of *shalom*, affirming Gordon's values for diverse viewpoints and a variety of perspectives, all emanating from a biblical framework as part of a Christian liberal arts education.

## Recommend that Gordon Engage with Intercultural Competence/Humility Training for Faculty, Staff, Administration and Specific Populations of Students

*Philippians 2:3-4 encourages us to be people of humility, seeking to look not only to our own interests, but also to the interests of others. A crucial step in this process is for God to give us the eyes to actually see and understand one another for who we are in the wholeness of how God has created us. The Gordon community consists of various “diversities,” including racial/ethnic, cultural, social, political and so on. Intercultural competence/humility training can empower us to see and to understand one another, thus equipping us to serve one another better as Christ has shown. Toward this end, we recommend the following:*

- The InterVarsity Institute has the ability to administer cultural intelligence (CQ) tools for training, coaching and feedback. These tools (which have been used at other Christian liberal arts colleges and evangelical ministries) are grounded in Gordon’s Christian commitments and shaped by the College’s foundational understanding around *shalom* (as described above).
- Gordon Cabinet, managers and faculty leadership (70–80 people in total) will receive CQ assessments, coaching, direction along with training in having constructive difficult conversations *through May 2021*.
- We will give monthly updates on the progress of the training and coaching to Gordon leadership.
- Explore current Gordon outlets for intercultural competence/humility training:
  - Chapel
  - Redeemed Mosaic gathering
  - Sealed Leadership Conference
  - Faculty workshops
  - Gordon Grows

## We Recommend that Gordon Add More Faculty and Staff of Color—at All Levels of the College



*There are numerous upsides to increasing Gordon's diversity. Besides increasing Gordon's understanding of difference and growing Gordon's reflection of God's diversity, increased diversity and inclusion aligns with the growing diversity of your student body. Gordon will be a more attractive option for a greater number of students. Also, greater diversity has been shown to increase both employee retention and workplace productivity. (Note: We acknowledge that retaining faculty and staff of color is equally important as hiring new faculty and staff of color. Gordon ultimately wants to promote a culture that leads to the thriving of all employees. See above for more on increasing the intercultural competency/humility at Gordon.) Toward this objective, we recommend the following:*

- **Work prayerfully and methodically for 20 percent of new hires (across faculty, staff and administration) in a three-year period to be people of color, working towards a 10-year goal to reach percentages comparable to the racial and ethnic diversity of the Gordon student body.** [Note that this is an aspirational goal meant to evaluate and establish recruiting pools of qualified candidates, to leverage the diverse networks of churches, schools, alumni and organizations, to examine factors that have played a role in past retention losses and to gain the benefits seen in the diversity of Gordon's student body. This is similar to a goal the College laid out years ago to grow the international student body to become 20 percent of undergraduate enrollment. This goal also comes close to approximating the current percentage of domestic students of color. In short, Gordon has experience in setting ambitious recruiting goals and in working diligently toward them. Just as that goal has enhanced the entire College community, so also will this goal.]
- The InterVarsity Institute can work with your Human Resources department to compile a list of "best practices," with data taken from our experiences/data sources and from departments across Gordon regarding past/current successful as well as unsuccessful hires among faculty and staff of color. The best practices list would be available to all Gordon hiring managers by August 2021. Subsequently, each manager seeking to hire a person of color will discuss the implementation of appropriate practices with Dr. Nicholas Rowe (or some other designated campus leader).

- Pursue opportunities to promote or hire persons of color at Gordon to senior levels, including at the Cabinet level.
- **While pursuing these hiring goals, the College remains fully committed to principles of equal employment opportunity.** Gordon will strive to hire the best qualified candidate for each and every opening, irrespective of race or ethnicity. It will strive to achieve its hiring goal by pursuing specific recruitment initiatives to enhance the diversity of its pools of qualified candidates. By making non-discriminatory hiring decisions from among more diverse groups of candidates, the College is confident that it can achieve its hiring goal.

### **We Recommend that Gordon Create and Support Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)**

*Employee resource groups are a great way for like-minded individuals to come together, celebrate their similarities and differences, educate others on the issues faced by this group, and to pursue alignment between who they are and the broader organization. Being part of one gives employees an opportunity to meet colleagues from other departments, build mentee-mentor relationships and keep contact with senior leadership through the group’s executive sponsors. ERGs give employees a safe place to come together, have a voice and promote change. Many Christian organizations utilize ERGs to increase employee satisfaction and to increase effectiveness in their ministry (e.g. InterVarsity Cru; Youth For Christ). We recommend the following:*

- Gordon creates ERGs for specific populations (primarily for staff and faculty of color; perhaps also for staff women, faculty women, disabled employees and other employee populations—cancer survivors, parents who adopt or other common bonds).
- ERGs would meet at least quarterly and begin in April 2021.
- Provide organizational support for ERGs (e.g., paid time to meet, facilities, etc.).

### **We Recommend that Gordon Augment the Undergraduate Core Curriculum**

*A primary context for the understanding, values, concept, and application of shalom is in the education of our student body. With this in mind, Gordon faculty leadership will augment the*

*undergraduate core curriculum to bring a greater integration and synthesis of shalom (topics, pedagogy) to undergraduate learning.*

- This will occur through existing common core classes that faculty will redesign with an eye toward biblical *shalom* (with the assistance of the Falcone Center for Teaching and Learning on campus and theological/biblical resources and scholars) as well as through divisional core offerings.

### **We Recommend that Gordon Train and Facilitate Students in Civil Conversation**

[From the Gordon Administrative/Faculty Handbook, Section 1] “As a Christian community of learners, Gordon College acknowledges the great commandments to love God with our hearts, souls and minds, and to love others. These commandments provide the foundation for learning, character and service. At Gordon the curricular and the cocurricular programs emphasize that the integration of who one is, what one knows and what one does is vital to the College’s mission.”

*It is clear from our survey analysis that Gordon students are having a difficult time communicating with one another, listening to one another and understanding one another. Such skills and practices are especially crucial at a time when the racial, cultural and political diversity in U.S. culture is producing impossible chasms that few can bridge; conversations about social justice, biblical justice, Black Lives Matter and All Lives Matter become yelling matches with no biblically based paths and solutions. With new tools and God’s Spirit, Gordon will be able to foster better civil conversation: the kind of civil conversation that will help bring more shalom to Gordon. Toward this objective, we recommend the following:*

- Analyze and evaluate the current tools and venues in which Gordon uses to foster civil conversations.
- Gordon’s student leaders (GCSA leadership, club presidents) receive CQ assessments, coaching and direction along with training and equipping in having constructive difficult conversations through May 2021.

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## **Recommendations from the InterVarsity Institute: Systems to Promote *Shalom***

### **We Recommend that Gordon Update Cameras to Better Promote Campus Safety**

*The College's leadership approved a significant capital investment to upgrade the quality of security infrastructure and to add more than 80 cameras around campus. The project is expected to be completed before the end of the spring semester. The administration, working closely with the Center for Technology Services, Gordon Police and Student Life, decided to add new cameras only to building entrances and exits. Gordon leadership believes this will allow a better monitoring of who is inside a building at any given time while still respecting the privacy of students in public areas like hallways or floor lounges. They also believe their approach is a solution that will allow students privacy and keep all the diversity of Gordon safe in the community. We in the InterVarsity Institute agree with this vision.*

- The cameras will be installed by spring 2021.

### **We Recommend that Gordon Create Protocols to Address Bias Incidents in Student Life and Human Resources**

*To accompany Gordon's current nondiscrimination and protection policies, Gordon needs to create simple, clear and accessible protocols for reporting and responding to campus bias incidents—protocols that are available to all in the residence halls, in the classrooms and anywhere else on the Gordon campus. Such protocols will facilitate thriving and accountability to everyone who learns, serves and works at Gordon. They would be a means for students and employees to communicate any kinds of bias incidents at Gordon. The protocols would be clear and accessible; they would also include a clear series of consequences for bias perpetrators. The protocols would (potentially) include utilizing an incident response team (IRT)—people who would administer the protocols and make judgements regarding bias incidents.*

- Note that a few of these incidents may actually be emergencies, and then be sent to the Emergency Response Team (ERT)/Cabinet (ERT is a newly recommended initiative—see below). Our expectation is the vast majority of incidents will not rise to this level and could be mediated by the IRT.
- The details of these bias protocols would need to dovetail (and potentially supplement) current Gordon discrimination and harassment policies.
- They are to be created with the input of the InterVarsity Institute and approved by the College's leadership, including legal counsel.
- They are to be completed by fall 2021.

### **We Recommend that Gordon Leadership Engage in Emergency Response Team (ERT) Training**

*Gordon's Cabinet has served as an attentive and compassionate emergency response team for challenging and controversial campus-related events. More training, coaching and direction will help them to be even more nimble and prudent as they seek to serve the Gordon community in even more effective ways. We recommend the following:*

- When there is a racially motivated incident, the president should seek to include two other people of color with the Cabinet for input and direction.
- The ERT is convened by the president.
- Framework:
  - This team is nimble and is able to make quick, thought-through decisions;
  - This team consists of collaborative team workers that are respected by the Gordon community.
- The training is administered by the InterVarsity Institute.
- The ERT training is to be completed by fall 2021.

We hope and pray these initiatives will be used by the Lord to deepen Gordon's commitment to *shalom* and contribute to the flourishing of everyone within the Gordon community as the College continues to be a place of preparing the people of God for the work of God.