

# The Significance of Articulating an Institution's Intellectual Distinctions in Response to the Crisis of the Liberal Arts

**Christian Teeter**

Mount Saint Mary's University

This case study details an investigation to gain greater insight about the intellectual distinctions that prevail within the academic environment at Crestline College, a pseudonym for an eastern institution of higher learning, in support of the significance of a liberal arts education. While many graduates of Crestline report satisfaction with their academic experience, many alumni volunteers have felt more work could be done to explain the exact nature of what makes Crestline strong academically, articulating the practical value of a liberal arts education. Developing a compelling argument for a strong vision for academics would help reinforce the value and importance of a liberal arts education, given the challenges facing the liberal arts amidst a changing economy and national disinvestment in humanities and related areas. The case study found that alumni and current students felt Crestline was distinguished because of a committed faculty, its intimate learning setting, its engaged student body, and the emphasis of critical thinking across the curriculum. Based on these findings, the study provides a set of recommendations for Crestline and other liberal arts institutions to consider as they continue to engage with their alumni in today's integrated, globalized society, with questions persisting about the future of liberal arts education and its value to society. Further study is recommended to gain greater insight on preparation for careers and how people are applying their education within career tracks.

**Keywords:** *liberal arts education, critical thinking, analytical skills, reasoning, professional networks*

## Introduction

Crestline College (a pseudonym for an eastern institution of higher learning), founded the early 19th century and situated on an idyllic campus setting in the northeastern United States, is one of the nation's leading liberal arts colleges. The institution is governed by a board of trustees and managed by an executive team that promotes the college's distinguished qualities through events, alumni activities, faculty scholarship, and advancement efforts. The college is financially sound and consistently receives high ratings for academics, alumni successes, and for the sylvan beauty of its campus. In addition to the governing board and executive leadership, the college supports its graduates through the administration of an alumni council, also known as the Alumni Corporation Board of Directors.

Given trends within higher education that have students moving in other directions, members of the board of trustees, administrators at Crestline, and other stakeholders in the organization sought new and intrinsic ways to reinforce the value of a liberal arts education. Fewer students pursue the liberal arts, with most of them studying practical subjects like finance, marketing, real estate, and pharmacy (Rimer, 2003). Many undergraduates today are influenced by their families and other

---

This study is dedicated to Dr. Catherine Koshland, vice chancellor for Undergraduate Education at the University of California, Berkeley, for her unwavering commitment to academic excellence.

---

Please address queries to: Christian Teeter, Mount Saint Mary's University. Email: [cteeter@msmu.edu](mailto:cteeter@msmu.edu)

factors into choosing vocational majors over those in the liberal arts (Brown, 2011). As such, liberal arts institutions such as Crestline College face formidable obstacles as they move forward in recruiting students and faculty, as well as engaging with external donors and stakeholders.

### Statement of the Problem

Although Crestline continues to enjoy a respected academic reputation and receives a significant amount of applications for admission each year, many within its community lack a cohesive, comprehensive way to explain the institution's intellectual distinctions. With a national debate about the future and status of the liberal arts underway, and with many institutions deemphasizing a liberal arts education across the country, it is imperative for Crestline and other like institutions to develop new approaches to articulate, explain, and promote the value of the liberal arts to prospective students and faculty, as well as alumni, donors and major stakeholders of the organization. As Miles (1999) noted, "More and more colleges and universities adopt the market model providing students not what tradition says but what they students themselves say they want, the liberal arts are being squeezed out of the curriculum" (p. 303). This presents a critical challenge for Crestline and other similar institutions given the reprioritization of many sectors of higher education to vocational focused educational programs not centered on liberal arts education approaches.

The challenge is further reinforced by Frederick Lawrence (personal communication, 2017), secretary and chief executive of Phi Beta Kappa, the national academic honor society:

There is a pushback in many places, in the political sector and some public universities, where there is a focus on education that is practical. Practical education meaning applied work, applied sciences, something that leads to a job right out of school. Many institutions are tuition driven, and they need to have adequate demand for students...In that market, there is going to be a lot of pressure to have applied programs...they will make a cut where demand is softer.

As Lind (2006) noted,

Most of the jobs created in the U.S. are low-prestige service sector jobs...that do not require college degrees...it is only to be expected that most students going to college will focus on the high wage professions rather than the liberal arts. (p. 57)

As a national priority, ideas of a well-informed public that can think critically and thoughtfully about global issues have been minimized in light of a massive disinvestment in public goods, including education (Brown, 2011). One senior alumni leader from Crestline articulated this challenge: "My impression is that we don't have a very good strategy as it relates to marketing our intellectual and academic distinctions. Communication in this area seems very inconsistent."

While every Crestline graduate has had a unique experience on campus, this research project sought to harness the views of alumni, graduating seniors, and faculty to depict a picture of the college's academic and intellectual distinctions that resonates, is clear, and can be explained through a variety of approaches, while recommending steps to be taken by the school to address the gaps noted here. Brown (2011) reinforced the current challenge with liberal arts: "Cultural values spurn it, capital is not interested in it, debt-burdened families anxious about the future do not demand it...According to popular wisdom the liberal arts are passé" (p. 22). With this situation in the

backdrop, a Crestline alumni leader noted a related challenge facing the college as it looks to recruit the top students:

All of our metrics have increased in terms of selectivity and financial aid, to expand our capabilities to go after kids who could not afford to attend, but I think there has been a gap in our articulating Crestline as a distinct academic institution.

Although many Crestline graduates have confirmed that they received a strong education while on campus, it is important to examine what exact elements of that academic experience were special and different. These issues support the rationale behind this study: attempting to put into writing and context the many intellectual and academic benefits that remain integral to liberal arts education today. The articulation of these distinctions, and the recommendations that follow, could help administrative leaders and alumni leadership formulate new value propositions with an intellectual bent that articulate the liberal arts' intrinsic qualities to prospective students and faculty, as well as to existing members of its community.

## Method

### Purpose

The purpose of this research is to better articulate the specific intellectual and academic distinctions of a liberal arts education, via a case study of Crestline College to provide a comprehensive set of recommendations for administrative leaders to consider when articulating the value of a liberal arts education. Given a national disinvestment in the liberal arts and new foci in different areas of study, reinforcement of the significance of the liberal arts is critical. Since the end of the Great Recession—probably because of the recession—there has been a profound shift toward viewing education as a vocational training ground (Lewin, 2013). This is critical given major changes in educational priorities among U.S. undergraduates.

By the year 2000, “Only three percent of American undergraduates were choosing a liberal arts major. The most popular majors in the United States were business, education, and health care” (Lind, 2006, p. 57). As such, the findings in this article offer insights to provide administrative leaders in liberal arts colleges new ways to explain the value of their educational offerings. This study provides details that could reduce uncertainties that may arise when competitive, highly sought-after college seniors pose these compelling questions to admissions officers during the annual admissions cycle regarding academics, campus life, and career services concerns, all along supporting the value that a liberal arts education provides, helping to transcend current concerns about the discipline as a viable form of study.

### Research Design

Research for this project took on a case study approach, given the central focus of the study. A case study design is developed to establish an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved (Merriam, 1998). The “cases” usually represent subjects such as a pupil, instructor, administrator, or a program, and as such, the unit of analysis for this study was Crestline's academics (Merriam, 1998). This research article is developed through a qualitative approach to study and relies upon surveys and personal interviews to provide research findings, complemented by scholarly articles that discuss the significance of the crisis facing the liberal arts, as well as issues of alumni and stakeholder engagement. All interview and survey questions were developed within an

ethnographic framework, which were designed to bring forth greater understanding of the culture of Crestline as it relates to academics on the campus (Patton, 2002).

## Participants

Twenty-five alumni and 25 graduating seniors were randomly selected by the Crestline College Office of Alumni Affairs and were sent surveys querying their academic and intellectual experiences on campus (see Appendix A). Respondents were promised confidentiality and anonymity in their responses to the surveys, and pseudonyms were used to identify individual participants affiliated with Crestline College. In addition, campus stakeholders were interviewed to provide background information that would further contextualize this research, via personal communication approaches.

The responses to the surveys were divided between alumni and graduating seniors and were indexed and summarized. Faculty members from numerous departments across campus were also interviewed to provide diversity of perspective, through a process of convenience sampling, given the multiple competing pressures on faculty (Pena, 2007). Current and former presidents of the Crestline alumni council were also interviewed. Interview protocols asked respondents for their perspectives about the intellectual life at Crestline, the role of critical thinking in the liberal arts, and requests for respondents to reflect on their engaging intellectual experiences on campus. In addition, the secretary and chief executive officer of the Phi Beta Kappa Society was interviewed regarding this study, and they were queried on their views of the status of the liberal arts and challenges faced in this area of higher education.

## Findings

Respondents to the surveys that were developed covered a variety of areas, and discussion focused on factors such as small class size, excellent and engaging faculty, intelligent peers, and exciting course subjects. As the findings were reviewed, a set of recommendations was developed, including advice for alumni leaders within the admissions areas of the campus. These recommendations were an attempt to hone in on specific topics of interest that would assist admissions representatives in distinguishing Crestline from competitor institutions in the process. As Crestline relies heavily on volunteers for alumni admissions activities, including admissions interviews, these insights and perspectives of alumni and graduating seniors provided significant insight into promoting Crestline's academic excellence to those outside of the school's immediate community, whether in advancement, admissions, or outreach conversations.

The findings from the study were broken out into the following themes: (a) committed faculty, (b) intimate learning environment, (c) academic talent of students, and (d) the significance of critical thinking in the curriculum.

### Committed Faculty

Crestline has long prided itself in maintaining a distinguished faculty that rivals many other leading institutions of learning across the country. The commitment of Crestline's faculty presents a quandary to the traditions of higher education in where the presence of a strong faculty has been shown to minimize the focus on effective undergraduate teaching (Kerr, 2001). Members of the faculty are focused on teaching, as well as scholarship, as one professor noted, "the faculty is distinguished because they strive to be both excellent researchers and teachers."

This combination of research and teaching has many compelling qualities that make Crestline distinct, as another faculty member noted,

Crestline insists that its faculty remain active, productive, publishing scholars in addition to being excellent teachers. This distinguishes us from most liberal arts colleges where scholarship is de-emphasized. When hiring new faculty, we are not asked to choose between a good teacher and a good researcher; instead, we are asked to identify candidates who are capable of filling both roles superbly.

This balance is taken into consideration with a strong focus on students, as an instructor noted, “If you come to Crestline (as faculty) and stay, you understand that students are important, and you have to do your best. This is not the case where research is the primary motivation.” One student noted that the school has strong academics due to “professors who are passionate and experts in their field.” This passion was reinforced by a faculty member who stated, “Every liberal arts college cares a lot about teaching, but it varies for research—at Crestline, research is particularly strong.”

The commitment of the faculty was emphasized by another graduate, noting, “The faculty treat the students as adults and in that respect they put a lot of effort into teaching and engaging the students, but also expect the students to prepare and think critically about the topics.” This collegiality was reinforced by the significance of partnership between faculty and students, as one professor commented,

Faculty work hard on their pedagogy, but beyond the classroom, they regularly take students with them to attend (and present articles at) national meetings. Especially in the Science Division, faculty offer numerous summer research experiences to their students, even though this means extra work for the research sponsors.

Collegiality can make a huge difference, as an alumnus said, “It was so special because I was treated not only as a student, but a colleague” and further stated that faculty “made me feel included and supported.”

### **Intimate Learning Environment**

While Crestline is not alone among its peers in offering very small faculty-to-student ratios, the intimate learning environment was a repeated focus. A current student commented, “When you know your professor’s credentials and see how genuine their interest is in their own subject, it’s inspiring.” Small classes were complemented by faculty who attended office hours regularly: “I was most stimulated during class discussions and during office hour conversations...I have loved the community feeling that Crestline’s campus has and have learned so much by talking with my professors inside and outside the classroom.” One alumnus responded that he appreciated “the interaction, accessibility and care the professors exhibited toward their students.” Another graduate noted, “professors really care about their students and their classes...spending time at the professor’s house.”

The benefits of the small learning environment that prevail at Crestline were further emphasized by one respondent who commented that faculty members “combine the field expertise with a desire to teach.” These mutual interests reinforced by the participants in this study buttress the learning environment and maximize the probability of sound engagement by students on the learning topic.

The intimacy of the learning environment is fully reinforced by another respondent's candor about the impact of the close relationships between faculty and students on the Crestline campus: "I will remember the relationships I was able to form with professors and the unique, personalized interest they had in me and my success." These attributes were reinforced by another graduate's statement about Crestline's intimate learning environment: "I will remember my relationships with my professors the most." The impact and benefits of these relationships was discussed further: "This knowledge [faculty's personal relationships with students] of the student, as an individual, provides the professor the ability to assess strengths and weaknesses so each student his maximizing her/his time in the classroom." A faculty member reinforced the significance of the close student-teacher relationships that prevail on campus: "My colleagues are interested in the lives of their students, and are quite willing to help when problems arise." Crestline faculty members were also commended for collaborating with each other to support troubled students—in many cases, taking the initiative to reach out to a student that was underperforming.

### **Intellectual Talent of Undergraduate Population**

Respondents developed a variety of reflections and statements that resonated concerning the great strengths of Crestline students. When describing their greatest intellectual accomplishments, alumni respondents noted a variety of issues, such as great professors, small classes, and engaging discussions with faculty outside of class. Small class sizes, as noted, can't be minimized as a distinction: "The small class sizes really help you be intellectually stimulated." Within this context, multiple alumni respondents noted the significance of classmates, with one graduate noting, "Whether you are discussing the course material or topics that are unrelated to the school, you quickly realize that you are in the company of sharp individuals. You have to step up intellectually." Another alumnus further explained that "Smart people tend to push each other intellectually and that helps a person develop his or her mind and refine his or her thought process...Crestline is one of the few schools where every student is intellectually tall enough to ride the ride." These ideals are reinforced by another graduate's statement about working with fellow students on campus:

You will never be the smartest person in the classroom. Your peers are highly intelligent and all have different strengths and weaknesses from your own. Take the opportunity to learn from one another and let yourself be vulnerable to things that don't come naturally to you.

The intelligence and drive of students were reinforced by students' appreciation of their studies and the efforts they put forth into them. This was emphasized by another respondent who stated, "Students passionately care about their projects." Strong student relationships were also emphasized, fostering an environment whereby students support each other, helping to create a "positive culture." The intellectual environment stimulated one respondent in a special way who noted that, "I was stimulated with incredible hands-on experiences that allowed me to really develop relationships with my peers." Crestline's competitive nature, emphasized by multiple respondents, was reinforced by another who stated that she was "constantly challenged by peers" in her studies on campus. The high functioning of Crestline students was reinforced by one respondent from the faculty who noted the importance of challenging students intellectually: "When you are teaching bright students, I find that bright students want to be challenged. They don't like it when it is easy." Working with smart people also helped graduates raise their confidence levels in a variety of areas, as one student commented, "discussion really prodded me to consider the opinions of others but also to speak up for myself and learn how to speak in front of others." The commitment of Crestline students was noted by one graduate who stated, "professors expect a great deal out of students and students really do deliver in this regard." The thriving of students within this competitive yet

collegial academic environment reinforces Crestline's core competencies as an institution committed to academic excellence.

### **Critical and Analytical Thinking**

Liberal arts graduates have propelled themselves to the highest levels of industries and markets because of their analytical reasoning abilities and approaches to thinking critically (Teeter, 2013). The Crestline faculty prides itself on the emphasis of critical thinking within the curriculum, as a faculty member and former administrator noted,

Across the board, this is the most agreed upon goal of the faculty—to make the students think critically. That comes from making students grapple with complicated problems, readings, and holding the students responsible for what they write and what they say... This is important because these are going to be people who are the next generation of leaders in business, community affairs and government – you want people in these positions who are thoughtful. You don't want people who are reactionary thinkers—I want to see careful, thoughtful people.

This aim was reinforced by another faculty member who weighed in on the topic: “To me, critical thinking means developing the courage to generate and defend your own ideas, solutions, analyses and inventions.” Crestline prides itself in reinforcing these values at every step, and findings from this study sustain the school's academic excellence in this area, with faculty members who “challenge students to think critically and help students push their intellectual boundaries.” One professor commented about his adaptation of critical thinking, “I think it is important to do that, because only by confronting difficult questions will you sharpen your ability to reason. It is only by confronting the hard questions in life that you have chance to do anything significant.” The Crestline faculty's commitment to critical thinking and reasoning also brings up the important concept of empathy. As espoused by Robert Greenleaf (1977), “empathy is the imaginative projection of one's own consciousness into another being” (p. 33). Students can benefit from the development of empathy in their critical thinking approaches, as many complex problems have multiple dimensions—if the problem can be seen and understood through the eyes of others, understanding it is that much easier.

The benefit of applying critical thinking to pedagogy that prevails at Crestline was compounded further by another graduate and Alumni Council member: “I was allowed to flex my intellectual curiosity and pushed to expand my horizons versus being prescribed how to examine something a certain way.” Graduates noted in their responses the significance of the faculty pushing them “out of my comfort zone” in various courses, with a comment about one faculty member: “She set clear expectations for me, called on me when I didn't have my hand raised...disagreed with me, pushed me to think more critically, and commended my efforts while pushing me to do better.” These significant outcomes reinforce the significance of the liberal arts and their abilities to transform students' analytical and reasoning capabilities, reinforcing the fact that the discipline helps students gain the ability to learn about what they do not understand (Delbanco, 2012). Respondents also repeatedly mentioned the college's offerings of study-abroad options, with one emphasizing that the benefits “enable students to become more independent, consider different global perspectives, and be more creative in their thinking.”

The faculty's dedication to the liberal arts and critical thinking showed the impact of this approach on the community of students, concerning an upper level philosophy and religion course: “In lesser

hands, this class could have been a disaster, but the professor made sure it was a thought provoking course...It was interesting seeing people who were part of different social cliques interacting and wrestling with ideas and concepts.” Respect for faculty was evinced in one student’s response:

They (faculty) don’t always give me the high grades that I think I deserve, and by doing that, they push me to think deeper...the critical thinking skill is something that I am forced to improve upon in every single class and is going to become an innate skill that I can take anywhere with me after Crestline.

After graduation, the distinctions of critical thinking have continued to resonate with graduates. One alumna summarized the advantages that she had over graduate school colleagues: “I have seen how my ability to problem solve (critical thinking) is relatively stronger than those students who merely majored in a highly technical or specialized STEM [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics] field.” The reflection of this particular respondent, currently attending a top graduate business program, reinforces the value of her Crestline education as she charts her forward course in business school and a future professional career.

Numerous respondents reinforced a quandary that faces many college students today: the issue of rote memorization. Participants in this study repeated the pitfalls of students pursuing such an approach at Crestline, emphasizing the significance of critical thinking and reasoning instead: “It is important to recognize that pure memorization will not yield As—instead most classes require application of what the professors teach.”

The importance of Crestline’s focus on lifelong learning was also reinforced by some, who emphasized the significance of critical thinking as applied to life out of school, noting about Crestline academics:

It will serve students well for the rest of their lives, as you are often asked to pivot in your career to new areas; the skills you build at Crestline enable you to do this, making you very adaptable to change you may make in your career.

## **Discussion**

### **Limitations**

The study focused on the intellectual environment that prevails at Crestline College and the value of the liberal arts education that students attain while completing their degrees at the college. The findings here articulate value in a variety of critical areas that reinforce the significance of a liberal arts education, but the data do not yield information about the specific relevance of the findings to the job and labor market. Further study is recommended to further review these skills and benefits and how Crestline graduates are applying these skills to achieve success in the labor market.

### **Analysis**

The findings yielded in this study demonstrate the many strengths of a liberal arts education in providing students with a comprehensive set of skills that make them ready to navigate the world and to address serious challenges in academic, business, government, or other professional environments. The establishment of an elite set of skills provides an invaluable cognitive approach to analysis, problem solving, and critical thinking. Crestline College should reevaluate its approaches to articulating the value proposition of its educational offerings. The sharp, effective responses by



students, alumni and faculty members make clear of the great opportunities for the school as it navigates uncertain times within higher education.

This research study was an attempt to gain greater understanding of the many academic distinctions that give high value to the liberal arts, via the academic environment that prevails at Crestline. The answers provided by study participants yielded significant trends that focused on the commitment of the faculty, the importance of intimate learning settings, and a commitment toward instilling critical thinking across the curriculum. The value of the Crestline education, again and again, came out during the discussions and responses. The underlying commitment of the faculty to fostering Crestline's intellectual traditions stood out the strongest—the long hours of work, the personal interest taken in students, and the close relationships forged between faculty and students makes a significant difference to students.

## Recommendations

Given the findings, and the importance of the school's academic traditions, the following recommendations are provided for administrative leaders of liberal arts institutions to consider: (a) Create a task force of alumni leaders from the board of trustees, alumni council, alumni admissions program chairs and president's club leaders to develop a comprehensive set of statements, terms, and slogans that articulate an institution's intellectual distinctions and how those distinctions reinforce the value and benefits of the liberal arts education provided. (b) Develop confidential annual surveys for students to share their outstanding intellectual experiences on a regular basis, and provide findings to the provost, office of admission, and office of alumni affairs. (c) Develop a white paper, in collaboration with alumni leadership and the institution's career services areas, to articulate the intellectual bridging that takes place by the networks between the practitioners in various professional fields, and the academic, liberal arts environment on the campus. Share research findings with the alumni leadership and the office of admission to offer talking points to alumni volunteers on the research findings. This proposed paper would be critical to demonstrating the value of a liberal arts education, as demonstrated in the success and achievements of the institution's graduates in the marketplace. (d) Further study is recommended to gain greater insight on the preparation for careers and how people are applying this education within their career tracks, as well as the impact that professional networks have in further supporting the career advancement of liberal arts graduates. Each of these suggestions can provide fodder for a great discussion about liberal arts education and the opportunities available to explain the value that a liberal arts education provides.

## Conclusion

The findings and recommendations from this study should inspire further conversations to explain the value of the liberal arts and a Crestline education, demonstrating the value of the liberal arts experience. At face value, the findings in this study demonstrate the opportunities that undergraduates within a liberal arts institution have to grow and evolve, intellectually, all within the engaging academic environment provided by the faculty and administration on campus—providing great educational value within a liberal arts environment. It is hoped that these ideas, thoughts, and impressions can be harnessed into a comprehensive set of tools that the institution can use as it reflects upon and articulates the things that make the school distinguishable academically. The many benefits of the liberal arts environment, as evinced by the findings of this study, demonstrate the value this educational approach affords students. In light of these findings, politicians and educators should take note of the benefits the liberal arts provide as they continue to

set our national, regional, and local priorities for postsecondary education. Although these findings are significant in demonstrating the strong skills that are fostered via the academic environment at Crestline, more research is needed to demonstrate the value that this education also provides for jobs and labor market opportunities.

## References

- Brown, W. (2011). The end of educated democracy. *Representations*, 116, 19–41.
- Delbanco, A. (2012). *College*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Greenleaf, R. (1977). *Servant leadership*. New York, NY: Paulist Press.
- Kerr, C. (2001). *The uses of the university*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lewin, T. (2013, October 30). As interest fades in the humanities, colleges worry. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/31/education/as-interest-fades-in-the-humanities-colleges-worry.html>
- Lind, M. (2006). Why the liberal arts still matter. *The Wilson Quarterly*, 30, 52–58.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Miles, J. (1999). Three differences between an academic and an intellectual: What happens to the liberal arts when they are kicked off campus? *Cross Currents*, 49, 303–317.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pena, E. V. (2007). *The responsive academic practitioner: Using inquiry methods for self-change* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (3262771)
- Rimer, S. (2003, February 19). Justifying a liberal arts education in difficult times. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/19/nyregion/justifying-a-liberal-arts-education-in-difficult-times.html>
- Teeter, C. (2013, August 4). The liberal arts hone the mind for globalized business. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/32c1228e-f9ff-11e2-98e0-00144feabdc0>

[Appendices follow]

## Appendix A

### Interview Protocol: Crestline Undergraduate

**Name:**

#### **Directions**

Thank you for participating in this survey, which supports an academic white paper on the liberal arts. Please kindly fill out the responses to the questions below. Your responses are strictly confidential and your name will not be shared as part of this exercise. Please use as much space in this document as needed.

#### **Alumni Events: Intellectual**

1. What has been your greatest academic experience at Crestline? What made it so special?
2. What, in your opinion, makes Crestline's academic offerings distinguished and more advanced than other institutions of higher learning?
3. What will you remember the most, academically, about your time on the Crestline campus?
4. How were you most stimulated, intellectually, by faculty members at Crestline?
5. After your upcoming graduation, what would you like to hear from Crestline about alumni events related to academics and intellectual issues?
6. Aside from reminiscing about your academics, what type of messages, announcements, or other information would make you inclined to attend a Crestline alumni event that is related to academics, scholarship, or other intellectual pursuit?
7. Are you interested in alumni events, with an intellectual bent, that are focused on issues related to the current day? If so, what would be appealing about this kind of event?



## Appendix B

### Interview Protocol: Crestline Faculty

**Name:**

#### Directions

Thank you for participating in this survey, which supports an academic white paper on the liberal arts. Please kindly fill out the responses to the questions below. Your responses are strictly confidential and your name will not be shared as part of this exercise. Please use as much space in this document as needed.

#### Interview Questions

1. Why is the Crestline faculty distinguished and how does it compare to other professoriates at competing institutions?
2. Many students and graduates feel that Crestline's faculty is committed. Why is this true and how have you seen this commitment reflected in the activities of your colleagues?
3. How do you challenge students to think critically and why is this important?
4. If you were speaking to a candidate for admission about the faculty at Crestline, what would you say? What advice might you provide about working with the faculty after enrollment?
5. How can the Crestline faculty most effectively connect, intellectually, with our alumni network? What are some events and/or activities that would help best achieve this aim?

## Appendix C

### Interview Protocol: Crestline Alumni

**Name:**

#### **Directions**

Thank you for participating in this survey, which supports an academic white paper on the liberal arts. Please kindly fill out the responses to the questions below. Your responses are strictly confidential and your name will not be shared as part of this exercise. Please use as much space in this document as needed.

#### **Alumni Events: Intellectual**

1. What was your greatest academic experience at Crestline? What made it so special?
2. What, in your opinion, makes Crestline's academic offerings distinguished and more advanced than other institutions of higher learning?
3. What do you remember the most, academically, about your time on the Crestline campus?
4. How were you most stimulated, intellectually, by faculty members at Crestline?
5. Aside from reminiscing about your academics, what type of messages, announcements, or other information would make you inclined to attend a Crestline alumni event that is related to academics, scholarship, or other intellectual pursuit?
6. What have been some messages about intellectual activities for alumni, coming from Crestline, that have resonated with you? What can the Alumni Council do to improve/enhance messages concerning intellectual events for graduates?
7. Are you interested in alumni events, with an intellectual bent, that are focused on issues related to the current day? If so, what would be appealing, intellectually, about this kind of event?

**Alumni Admission Activities: Intellectual/Academic**

8. If you met a high school senior today, what would tell that person about Crestline's academics?
  
9. How would you advise a high school student, in general, to prepare for academics at Crestline?
  
10. If speaking to a high school senior that asks about Crestline's distinguishing academic qualities, what would you share?
  
11. What are a few factors, in your opinion, that make Crestline's academics more advanced than other institutions?

## Appendix D

### Interview Protocol – Educational Executive

#### Directions

Thank you for participating in this survey, which supports an academic white paper on the Liberal Arts. Please kindly fill out the responses to the questions below. Your responses are strictly confidential and your name will not be shared as part of this exercise. Please use as much space in this document as needed.

1. Do you feel that there has been a disinvestment in Liberal Arts and Humanities programs within higher education? Why or why not? And if so, what do you see as the impacts and consequences?
2. What are the benefits of obtaining a baccalaureate degree in the Liberal Arts and Humanities?
3. What steps can institutions of higher learning take to support the continued availability of the Liberal Arts and Humanities within college curricula? Why will these make a difference?

---

The *Journal of Educational Research and Practice* provides a forum for studies and dialogue that allows readers to better develop social change in the field of education and learning. Journal content may focus on educational issues of all ages and in all settings. It also presents peer-reviewed commentaries, book reviews, interviews of prominent individuals, and additional content. The objectives: We publish research and related content that examines current relevant educational issues and processes aimed at presenting readers with knowledge and showing how that knowledge can be used to impact social change in educational or learning environments. Additional content provides an opportunity for scholarly and professional dialogue regarding that content's usefulness in expanding the body of scholarly knowledge and increasing readers' effectiveness as educators. The journal also focuses on facilitating the activities of both researcher-practitioners and practitioner-researchers, providing optimal opportunities for interdisciplinary and collaborative thought through blogging and other communications.

**Walden University Publishing:** <http://www.publishing.waldenu.edu>

---