

## INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

### **O1. Distinctive Features**

Concordia River Forest is a private university of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. As such it is part of the Concordia University System, the oldest (founded 1864 in Addison, Illinois as Concordia Teachers College) of ten institutions of the same name. Located on forty acres in a wooded, near-west suburb of Chicago, the campus sits amid an upscale residential community nine miles from Lake Michigan. The Chicago Loop is fifteen minutes away by car or public transportation.

At the center of what we do at Concordia is our mission and vision statement:

<p>As a distinctive, comprehensive university of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, centered in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and based in the liberal arts, Concordia University equips men and women to serve and lead with integrity, creativity, competence, and compassion in a diverse, interconnected, and increasingly urbanized church and world.</p>
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We claim four core values in our mission statement: integrity, creativity, competence and compassion, and we consider our central mission to equip students to serve and lead in a diverse, interconnected, and increasingly urbanized church and world. We enjoy a strong reputation for offering a quality education, particularly in teacher education, our historic signature program, and music. Additionally, a primary purpose of the Concordia University System, according to the sponsoring church body, is the preparation of church professionals. To that end, 48% of our undergraduate students are enrolled in pre-professional church work (pre-seminary, Deaconess, Director of Christian Education, Lutheran teacher, and Director of Parish Music) programs. Inherent in our mission are underlying tensions, especially as various constituencies understand and interpret differently the purpose of a church-related institution of higher learning. As a University in the Lutheran educational tradition, we regard these tensions as challenging, but also fruitful and even a necessary part of what it means to be people of faith engaged in the academy. We are a tuition-driven institution that for three of the past four years has been in the upper tier of regional universities in the *US News* ranking of America's best colleges.

### **O2. Scope of Institutional Offerings**

Traditionally a teacher training institution (Concordia Teachers College), Concordia began offering masters degrees in 1957 and became a University in 1990. In 1999 it added a doctoral program in collaboration with three other universities in the Concordia University System as partners. Consistently, half the undergraduate student body is enrolled in teacher training programs and half in liberal arts programs. An accelerated adult degree program in organizational management (CU-Succeed) is offered through the University College. Graduate programs are offered predominantly in the College of Education (14 of 25), which also offers post-masters certification programs in school counseling and school administration. Graduate

programs are offered both on campus and through extension sites in the Chicago metropolitan area.

The University includes three colleges: Arts and Sciences, Education, and University College, and offers bachelors degrees in 40 majors (29 in Arts and Sciences), masters degrees in 19 areas and the Ed.D. in two areas, school leadership and early childhood education. A Bachelor of Science degree will be offered beginning in Fall 2005 in mathematics, chemistry, and computer science.

The general education curriculum was revised in 2003 to assure full compliance with the Illinois Articulation Initiative. The Concordia Core includes two mission-specific interdisciplinary courses, a First-Year Experience (IDS 1970: Freedom and Responsibility) and a senior capstone (IDS 4970: Values and Virtues). The student to faculty ratio is 19:1. Undergraduate students may participate in study abroad opportunities in Europe, South America, Asia, and Australia through a variety of programs or the Washington Semester through the Lutheran College Washington Consortium. Domestic exchange programs include a consortium with Dominican University, our River Forest neighbor, and the CUS visiting student program.

### **O3. Student Base**

Our student base is shifting due to the introduction and rapid growth of graduate cohorts beginning in late 2003 and an increase in the number of students transferring to Concordia from two-year colleges. Traditionally an undergraduate institution, we are learning to be more inclusive as to how we define and welcome students.

55% of the undergraduate population comes from Illinois. The academic profile of freshmen entering through a selective admission process reflects a median ACT score of 23 and a GPA of 3.27. 80% of transfer students come from Illinois.

Half of the 1000 undergraduates are residential students living in one of seven residence halls on campus, half commute. The majority of undergraduates are traditional college age and close to half are Lutheran, most from the LCMS.

The graduate student body of 950 reflects a broader diversity than the undergraduate population in both age and ethnicity. The average age of graduate students is 39, with many being teachers from the surrounding school districts seeking graduate degrees for certification renewal.

The adult degree completion program, named COMP was revised in fall of 2003 to become an accelerated degree program for adults and renamed CU-Succeed. The former COMP program currently has 43 students enrolled in this cohort program. CU-Succeed has 39 students enrolled as of February 2005. We anticipate steady growth for the new program as additional cohorts begin both on and off campus.

Additionally, we welcome two unique student populations. High school students in Wisconsin and Illinois who qualify can take courses for credit. Seventy-six students earned 297.5 credit hours during the 2003 - 04 academic year through this opportunity. Area residents over age 60 qualify to audit courses in the 60+ program for only \$15 per credit hour on a space available basis.

Our students seek a quality educational experience as well as career preparation. An important consideration for a significant portion of our undergraduate students is their desire for a Christian

higher education. Graduate students attend Concordia primarily due to the reputation of its educational programs.

**O4. Collaborations**

Relationships with external partners include bodies to which the University is directly accountable as well as those with whom partnership is important for accreditation and credentialing purposes. A much more detailed discussion is found under Criterion 9.

AFFILIATIONS	NATURE
Congregations of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod	Provide students, support and placement opportunities
Board for Higher Education, LCMS	Governance
Concordia University System	Governance
Northern Illinois District, LCMS	Collaboration
Local K-12 school districts	Collaboration, student teacher and internship placements and supervision
Illinois State Board of Education	Recognition
Accreditation agencies: NCA/NCATE/CACREP/NASM	Recognition
Two-year colleges	Transfer, collaboration

**O5. Faculty and Staff Base**

There are 67 full-time faculty members, 7 visiting faculty members, and the equivalent of 35 FTE part-time/adjuncts. 73% of the faculty members hold terminal degrees in their respective disciplines. Of 185 non-teaching staff, 92% are full-time. The faculty is highly committed to teaching, scholarship, and service, but is strained by losses in its ranks. Steady attrition means the faculty is two-thirds the size of its 1997 strength.

**O6. Critical and Distinctive Facilities, Equipment, and Technologies and Regulatory Environment**

The campus includes 28 buildings comprising 181,898 square feet of instructional and 62,534 square feet of administrative space. The most recent structure, the Walter and Maxine Christopher Center for Learning and Leadership, houses a state-of-the-art licensed early childhood education center. Last year the Center served a total of 240 children from both the campus and surrounding communities. Campus physical plant services are housed in the Fred A. Spurgat Services Building.

Regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, Concordia joined AQIP in 2001, completed the first round of Action Projects in 2004 and initiated a second set to begin in fall 2004. Our initial certification programs in education are accredited by NCATE. The School and Community Counseling programs have CACREP accreditation. In spring 2003 our music programs at the baccalaureate and post baccalaureate levels received NASM accreditation.

The Board of Regents carries out governance of the University, with additional accountability as a member of the Concordia University System to the Board for Higher Education of the LCMS. All education programs meet the regulatory standards of NCATE and the Illinois boards. In the area of technology, we use Banner as the administrative software for all operations and WebCT as our course management system. We host both a University website, <http://www.curf.edu>, and an internal intranet, <http://intranet.curf.edu>, for faculty, staff and students. As do other campuses, we depend on email, voicemail, and a campus video network for communication. CougarNet coordinates information services on campus. The operating budget for fiscal 04 was \$26.9 million; for fiscal 05 it is \$28.8 million. The current unrestricted fund balance is \$8.5 million and the endowment \$12.1 million.

### **O7. Competing Institutions and/or Organizations**

At the undergraduate level, we consider the following schools in the greater Chicago area as peer institutions: Elmhurst College, Dominican University, North Central College and Concordia University-Wisconsin. As schools of aspiration, those who model the next step beyond Concordia's current status, we look to Wheaton College, Augustana College, Valparaiso University, and Illinois Wesleyan University. At the graduate level, peer institutions include National Louis University, Aurora University, Loyola University, St. Xavier University, Dominican University and the University of Illinois at Chicago.

### **O8. Key Opportunities and Vulnerabilities**

We continue to transition out of a difficult financial situation that has preoccupied the campus since December 2002, and which led to the resignation of the president in July 2003. We were able to welcome a new president in November 2004. We struggle with resistance to change, with the reality of being resource-challenged due to the financial difficulties, and with a badly divided campus community based on the tension noted in Q01. We are challenged by student retention and with meeting the needs of increasingly diverse student populations. Key opportunities in the near future include the completion of 2+2 articulation agreements with two-year colleges in the area and continued partnership with the Educational Advantage Group that identifies students for the graduate cohorts.

New action projects for 2004-2007 include (1) development of an assessment system, (2) the integration of graduate student services, and (3) the integration of undergraduate student services with particular attention to transfer students.

**GLOSSARY OF TERMS and ACRONYMS**

<b>ACCA</b>	Associated Colleges of the Chicagoland Area
<b>ACI</b>	Associated Colleges of Illinois
<b>ASPC</b>	Arts and Sciences Policies Committee
<b>BUE</b>	Board for University Education of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
<b>BoR</b>	Board of Regents
<b>CACREP</b>	Council For Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs
<b>CAS</b>	College of Arts and Sciences
<b>CoE</b>	College of Education
<b>COMP</b>	Concordia Organizational Management Program
<b>CU-Succeed</b>	Accelerated degree completion program for adult learners
<b>CURES</b>	Concordia University Research and Evaluation Services
<b>CURF</b>	Concordia University River Forest
<b>CUS</b>	Concordia University System
<b>DCE</b>	Director of Christian Education
<b>DoL</b>	Department of Leadership
<b>DPM</b>	Director of Parish Music
<b>ECEC</b>	Early Childhood Education Center
<b>EPC</b>	Education Policies Committee
<b>GPC</b>	Graduate Policies Committee
<b>IAI</b>	Illinois Articulation Initiative
<b>IBHE</b>	Illinois Board of Higher Education
<b>ISBE</b>	Illinois State Board of Education
<b>KCC</b>	Koehneke Community Center (student union)
<b>LCMS</b>	The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
<b>LECNA</b>	Lutheran Educational Conference of North America
<b>NAICU</b>	National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
<b>NCATE</b>	National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education
<b>NID</b>	Northern Illinois District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
<b>NIIIC</b>	Northern Illinois Iowa Conference (athletics)
<b>NASM</b>	National Association of Schools of Music
<b>OFE</b>	Office of Field Experience
<b>OPRF</b>	Oak Park River Forest
<b>OURS</b>	Office of University Research Services
<b>SA</b>	Student Association
<b>SPA</b>	Specialty professional association
<b>TEAC</b>	Teacher Education Admission Committee
<b>TED</b>	Teacher Education Department
<b>UAS</b>	Unit Assessment System
<b>UC</b>	University College
<b>UCPC</b>	University College Policies Committee