

# **Reflection on the Erskine College That We Know:**

**by**

**Some Students and Younger Alumni of Erskine College**

## *Scientia cum moribus conjuncta*

This document presents some of the many letters and internet “postings” that have been written by younger Erskine students and alumni over the last year or so as Erskine College and the ARP Church has become embroiled in controversy. For those who have access to the internet, many of these letters will be familiar. For those who do not have access to the internet or who have chosen to stay away from the controversy, we ask you to please take a moment to read and reflect upon what is written here – words of love and deep commitment to both God and his works through the institution of Erskine College.

There are some things that are certain in the current debate - Erskine College and the ARP Church have a deep historical connection. Alumni and members of the ARP Church, and especially those who are both, feel deeply about Erskine. Whatever else we may think and say, we all share a love for Erskine and desire to see her continue as one of the best Christian liberal art colleges in the southern US!

Much has been said about the loss of “mission fidelity” at Erskine over the last 20 years or so. Some of this has come from current students and young alumni, also known to some as the SAFE students. This document contains testimony that describes an Erskine that is different from the one they seem to know. It is these students and recent graduates’ letters that speak loudly as to how God is working through Erskine College. Amongst these students, there is a belief that Erskine College is meeting its commitment to integrate faith and learning right now!

So here are some of the thoughts of younger Erskine Alumni and current students. We hope that you find these stories compelling! We believe that God has been and continues to work through Erskine College and Seminary. These documents are a reflection of His work there. May God continue to bless Erskine College and Seminary and the ARP Church!

**Matt Diaz**  
**Class of 2012**  
**June 2, 2010**

### **An Epistle to the ARP Church**

In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas  
(in necessary things unity, in doubtful things liberty, in all things love)

Many well-intentioned Christians, throughout history, have alienated others because they have believed that in order to be “Christian” (or an “Evangelical Christian”), all Christians must conform to a Christian image that is often created by mere humans. Whether that means conforming to an external image (e.g. wearing nice western clothes, men having short hair, or only hymn music written between the 17th and 19th centuries) or an internal image, which may mean that we impose our beliefs upon others (in order to be a Christian, he or she must believe everything just as we do). This has caused much division throughout church history, whether it was fighting over if baptism should have immersion or sprinkling; if the Lord’s Supper should be transubstantiation or consubstantiation; etc. Are those really things we should divide the church over? God’s Word does not tell us that all Christians must agree upon every single iota of their theology, but we are told to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” Many Christians have tried to include more essentials than the Bible prescribes, which ought not to be because it ultimately does more harm than good (cf. 1 Corinthians 3, which shows that jealousy and quarrelling are both signs of worldliness and infant-like because people are fighting over silly things; 1 Corinthians 11:17-22 shows that there are divisions amongst the people and that there are people abusing the church; 2 Timothy 2:14 shows that the workman of God should not quarrel over words, which is something way too prevalent today).

Christians should seek to unite over what really matters - the necessities of the Gospel, which are a loving God (including repentance, worship, prayer, Scripture reading, etc.) and loving neighbors (including showing the love of Christ indiscriminately/xenophilically, proclaiming and explaining God’s love, and having Christian fellowship). The arguing needs to stop, people must either humble themselves and draw near to God or perish. God is not necessarily far from us, we just tend to draw away from Him due to our self-seeking, sinful nature, which even infiltrates and corrupts our imperfect ideas of religion. No man or woman, ever, unless they were perfectly omniscient, has an exclusive and exhaustive grasp upon absolute/objective truth and all Christians should realize that even though they have been redeemed and shown the Way and the Truth, that the Truth is too grand for a finite mind to entirely grasp. The implications to admitting this are firstly a voluntary submission unto God for all things; secondly showing humility to our neighbors indiscriminately; thirdly living out Jesus’ love through His power, which gives evidence to the Truth, which we proclaim.

Not only would this realization within Christians unite fellow believers, but it would also give credence and will testify to the Truth, which is Jesus Christ, to all, even those outside the Church. If Christians humble themselves, like the tree that must root downwards in order to grow upwards, it will unite Christians and shock non-Christians. Thus, “to be a witness does not consist in engaging in propaganda, nor even in stirring people up, but in being a living mystery. It means to live in such a way that one’s life would not make sense if God did not exist.”

Also, Christians should remember words are like toothpaste; it comes out of the tube easy, but

it's impossible to get back in. Christians, who should have learned from history, especially those in the Reformed/Lutheran tradition, that we should not forcefully impose our belief upon our fellow Christians (for what if we are wrong about something?) nor non-Christians because we should want the Holy Spirit to work within the person and for them to be convicted of the Truth instead of accepting it based off a fine argument (which goes against the Westminster Confession of Faith, Cf. Chapter I paragraph V). Since we might be wrong about some things, we should strive for unity in the things that really matter, again, the love of Christ and we should want to spread His love throughout the world (cf. John 17:20-26; Ephesians 4; Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 15:5-6; Psalm 133:1).

The leaders of the ARP church should look into their hearts and prayerfully ask whether they are truly seeking peace, the disinterested (i.e. not uninterested, but disinterested, which means "the state of not being influenced by personal involvement/gain in something; impartiality) well-being of Erskine College and Seminary, and ultimately, and hopefully foremost, the promotion of Christ's love into the hearts and minds of the students and the students' communities. Right now, some ARP pastors think that evolution should not be taught and that an affirmation of inerrancy should be expected from all Erskine professors. Both of these would go against SACS requirements. They should instead expect professors to show love to students, which should be a trait that marks Erskine faculty as distinct from most other academic institutions. Many Erskine professors have shown love to their students by personally investing time and energy towards helping them through aiding them, advising them, challenging them, and thus sharpening students (cf. Proverbs 27:17). Many students learn to critically synthesize and analyze information and reason, so that we are not deceived by "every spirit," (i.e. Christian faith is not spiritual gullibility), but we learn to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God," (i.e. to test every idea, thought, theory, and belief to see if they are true) so that we will not "judge by appearance, but judge with right judgment" and that we are "always prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (cf. 1 John 4:1; John 7:24; 1 Peter 3:15).

Jesus, Himself, during His earthly ministry, used critical thinking. He did not merely accept everything the religious leaders said, but challenged them and their beliefs. When He was challenged about healing on the Sabbath, He pointed to the law's higher purpose: "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or destroy it?" Jesus pointed to the primacy of the love of God and the love of our neighbors (showing that we should love even those maybe "heathen" Samaritans). The critical thinking that is seen in the Bible by Jesus challenges the thinker to not just reflect, but to act.

Academic freedom is being fought for at secular universities by some Christians, but at Erskine College, a Christian Liberal Arts school, it should be defended. The ARP leadership should support academic freedom at Erskine College so that Erskine students may be fully equipped to live in the "real world" (i.e. the world outside of Erskine), be able to compete academically, and to shine as lights in whatever field of work they end up in.

"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds." (2 Corinthians 10:4)

VDMA,

Matt Diaz

**Kate Setzer  
Class of 2012  
June 7, 2010**

### **Some Observations About Erskine**

This coming fall I will be at Junior at Erskine College. I return to this school for my third consecutive year of education with worry. In the course of my studies I have interacted with staff and administration through classes and work study. I have witnessed Christ through their interactions with others.

My freshman year I took a Critical Thinking course with Dr. Crenshaw. As I took my seat that first class, he informed us that we would be challenged-challenged to understand what we believe and how others believe- if we did not want this challenge then we had the choice of changing classes. I remember that the topic of evolution emerged in discussion and a fellow student took offense because it conflicted with their religion by saying, "That is not what I believe so I know it's wrong". Crenshaw responded, "You do not have to believe it to understand it; but you do need to understand it, for conversations and interactions in the future." Crenshaw taught us to think beyond ourselves. Yes, he did challenge our faith, but to help it grow. He invested so much time and interest into each topic and response. At the end of that semester I walked out of that class determined to fully understand my God and others; I was not intimidated by Crenshaw. I can not comprehend why this professor has been targeted; in the real world we are going to the challenged and feel intimidated, but it is our faith that makes us prevail. College will not be there to cushion it; Crenshaw wanted us to see that our faith is a personal relationship with Christ not something to believe simply because our parents do. It is a willing relationship. I was taught to think-not assume, and to know my bible and beliefs so that I could present it well and completely understand what I claim to follow. During my first year at Erskine I was introduced to "The Barn", Paul Patrick, and people who attended the Barn on a regular basis. At first this exposure was welcomed, but after I did not fit into their mold, those people who cared so much for my attendance at the Barn no longer tried. Sophomore year I felt a feeling of rejection coming from these people because I did not follow along with this group. Due to schoolwork and this particular feeling, I did not attend the Barn on Sunday evenings for close to three months. Not a single member from this click-like group encouraged me to go or asked about my lack of attendance. Except one... on the weekend of the very last Barn meeting. "Are you going to the Barn this weekend?", "No, I have not been for two and a half months and no one has asked me about it, only you." There are not many people from this group that I truly admire or feel that they can positively influence me spiritually. I choose Erskine because of God's leading hand, education, and the education department. I know this is where God wants me. I love Erskine dearly and fear for its future. I plan to return in the fall but I am concerned for Erskine's accreditation. How could anyone continue at a college where their degree would not be accepted for graduate work? I ache for Erskine during this time of confusion. I am praying for the leaders of Synod, that God will open their hearts and minds to the destruction they are causing to a college that most of them have never even visited. Attacking Erskine is attacking the student body, staff, and God's witness in today's world.

**Megan Ferguson  
Class of '09  
June 14th, 2009**

**A letter to President Ruble and the Erskine Board of Trustees**

Dear President Ruble, Chairman-Elect Mitchell, and Board of Trustees,

I am disappointed and frustrated with the recent attacks on Erskine and the way in which they are being conducted. The Erskine that I see described by these students in no way reflects the Erskine I loved and cherished for four years, nor an institution that I would have chosen to attend. When I began my college search in my sophomore year of high school, I made sure to visit all types of schools, public and private, large and small. What I found at Erskine was unique, and so I chose to make this my college home.

During my time at Erskine, I found my faith and beliefs to be challenged and strengthened in the classroom and in my daily life. Erskine gave me opportunities for my faith to flourish that I had not previously experienced. Small groups, working with SCA and Project SMILE, attending church and growing to love the Due West ARP family, and discussions in my classes were all regular occurrences for me. I feel strongly that if a student is open to these types of interactions and willing to take the initiative to make them happen (just as would be necessary on any other campus) there is no reason for a commitment to Christ to fall by the wayside at Erskine.

I find it difficult to understand how one can determine a student or professor is not a Christian based on merely opinion without engaging the person in discussion or interaction. In direct opposition to this, I found my classes to provide a highly integrative view of the Scriptures and their application to daily life. The Education Department (from which I graduated with a double major) uses Romans 12:2 as a cornerstone of the program. The verse reads:

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.” This is an interesting choice for a department that is responsible for preparing Christian teachers for a decidedly secular public school system. However, I found the choice to be extremely appropriate. Christians are not to live by the patterns of the world, but this doesn’t mean isolation. Throughout my years we regularly discussed in class how we could show the love of Christ and His grace to our students, even when our words or actions must be limited. In my mind, the need is greatest for Christians not in a separate community, but in the world at large. Are we not to reach out to others? My time at Erskine and interactions with people of different faiths and viewpoints was invaluable in preparing me for the workforce, all the while providing me the resources to further and strengthen my faith.

Additionally, I am quite certain that the students who are upset with the administration and faculty would be hard pressed to find a campus that better emulates a love of Christ balanced with acceptance and mercy for others. I certainly didn’t while searching for a college. Just a few examples of the types of interactions I experienced while at Erskine include professors opening their homes to me, and providing me with home and cell phone numbers in case I had a question. Professors attended student events, both service and performance based, and in several of my small groups Erskine faculty were active participants. I went to church weekly with professors and faculty. I took courses with a wide variety of professors and departments, and was always

encouraged to speak up in class. I never felt as if I was denied the right to defend my beliefs, but I did learn to be sure of what I believe and more confident in sharing that with others. I saw Erskine administration, particularly Dr. Ruble, get involved in students' lives in a way that was traditional of the presidents that came before him. He worked out in the gym with students, he attended every Erskine wedding, concert, and student performance and he daily came to the cafeteria just to check in with students. I feel Dr. Ruble does an incredible job trying to meet the needs of students while being open to suggestions and comments. From what I have observed his commitment to Erskine is unparalleled.

I am proud to be an Erskine graduate. For four years while I was a student, I volunteered with Admissions to host prospective students, lead tours, and speak at events, not because I had a ton of free time, but because I believed in Erskine and wanted others to find the same joy I found there. I found opportunities there that I did my best to soak up, and through my involvement with different organizations and my time spent in class, I have emerged a person who is far more confident and prepared to exist as a Christian in our culture than when I entered. As a young alumni, I made a point to begin as soon as possible to give to Erskine, because I want to repay in some small part the scholarships that allowed myself, my brother and so many of my friends and peers to become Erskine students, and to contribute to the positives resources that made my time at Erskine wonderful. However, the Erskine I love so dearly does not include a focus on exclusion and separation. Individual students, faculty, and staff may change, but I firmly believe Erskine still has the tools and commitment to remain exactly what she says she is, an institution based on Christian commitment and excellence in learning.

Sincerely,

Megan Ferguson, class of 2009

EBK, SCA, Judicial Council, ODK, Project SMILE

**Jeremy Oropeza**  
**Class of 2008**  
**June 13th, 2009**

**A Letter to President Ruble, the Erskine Board of Trustees, and the Erskine Community**

Dear President Ruble, Board of Trustees, and Concerned Erskine Community at Large,

On a Saturday in April 2003, I stepped foot onto the Erskine College campus for the first time, after only first hearing about this institution of higher learning mere months before. I had worked myself to near exhaustion in high school to be able to get into any institution I applied for, and succeeded but on that April day, I knew I had found my home. The spirit of love and welcome was exuded from every part of this campus, from the people I met that day, all the way down to the care that was put into maintaining its grounds. I called the other schools I had been accepted to the following Monday to tell them "I'm sorry, I've found another school, another home."

I came expecting to learn at the feet of amazing professors, I've yet to see where that expectation was not met. I came to learn music, I have now had two successful jobs in that field, and several more offered to me, just because of my connection to this school. I came expecting to grow and flourish, and what I received was beyond my wildest dreams. I had professors willing to move a class time just so I would be able to be in Choraleers every day (thank you Dr. Signori), willing to sit down with me and explain in excruciating detail when I didn't understand (thank you Drs. Christie and Elsner), professors from outside of my department that knew my passion and gave me materials that they thought would further me! (Dr. Chaney will never know how much that copy of "The Oxford Book of Carols" meant to me and all the help it gave.)

I gained friendships that will last a lifetime, a mentor who keeps me going and working toward my ultimate dream of being the best church musician I possibly can be. Most of all I gained true knowledge and understanding of Christ's love. There was a camaraderie that I can say, with assurance, I wouldn't have gotten anywhere else. Yes, I was challenged, academically, physically, emotionally, and in my faith; in and out of the classroom. I had questions, but I was put on the right path to finding the answers when people couldn't give me one right away. I learned about myself and my faith, and even though I may still have questions, I have been equipped with the knowledge of how to find the answers myself in a Christian manner.

I am now a proud Erskine Theological Seminary student, striving towards a Master's degree in Church Music. The first to say, I graduated from Erskine College as an undergraduate and received what I believe to be the best education out there. I have actively recruited students to this campus, in the hope that they find what I found.

I have been here six years, and will start my seventh in the fall; I have seen this campus brought together and now I am seeing it divided more and more every day. Now, my alma mater is suffering persecution; now, I am stepping up to give my story and to show my great unswerving love for this school and what it stands for; a Christian Community where I am free to learn and achieve excellence in academia. Take heart Erskine that I love dearly, we may have hit a rough patch, but it is my faith from both knowledge of God's truths and experience in my own life, these troubles, will also, pass. May Erskine continue to look proudly down from the towers as long as they stand. Praise be to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the blessed Three in One, and may God bless us all and draw us closer to Him!

Jeremy P. Oropeza, Erskine College Class of 2008, Erskine Theological Seminary Class of 2010

**Zachary Davis**  
**Class of 2008**

Mr. Moderator and the Members of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Synod,

What schools does the Synod admire for their ability to connect Biblical truth and learning? Calvin College? Wheaton College? Let us examine these schools' Boards of Trustees. Both include corporate executives, both include medical professionals, both include ministers, both include academics, both include administrative personnel from other colleges. At both schools, pastors make up less than 15% of the Board membership. Looking at Erskine College, we see around half of the Trustees are from the Church. If you dismiss the current Board of Trustees, then I suggest that you replace them with a more diverse group, not less. If you believe that Erskine College is not integrating faith and life, then let people who have done so successfully, in diverse fields, be the role models. Allows students to see people who lead Christian lives in positions where students see themselves after graduation. A Christian life intertwined with a Christian occupation means little for students in today's world. We struggle with keeping Christianity in our lives as scientists, as business professionals, as teachers. Provide us with role model Trustees who understand these struggles and can provide ideas for keeping the connection between faith and the lives we lead strong.

I loved my four years at Erskine, and not because faith was pressed upon me, but rather because it was pervasive to the entire campus. The people of Erskine College – students, faculty and administration alike – were always there when I had questions about faith, about life, about whatever was on my mind. You are correct when you state that there are professors on Erskine's campus who challenge and question students' faith. I would also agree that their actions are intentional. We differ, however, on what we believe those intentions are. Currently, students' faith is questioned with the full knowledge that there is a support system and there are people who honestly desire for every student at Erskine to be a Child of God. If we remove this opportunity for the strengthening of our faith, then when students find themselves in the "real" world, they will be at a loss to defend what they believe. Professors do not attack their students' faith because they disagree with Christianity – they challenge students' faith because professors at Erskine care enough to want students to be able to defend the attack the next time it happens.

We cannot grow simply by following the footsteps of our fathers. Many years ago, a man studied the Word of God and became firmly rooted in it. When he preached, the church that he was a part of challenged his faith. Because of his strength in God, he was able to meet this challenge. Ebenezer Erskine, the College's namesake, was ejected from his congregation because of what he believed, yet he went on to found the Associate Presbytery. Ebenezer Erskine made new footsteps, made a new way for himself and his newly-formed church. As a College, Erskine must fulfill its mission of "[equipping] students to flourish" just as Ebenezer Erskine himself flourished when his faith was questioned. I submit to you, Members of the Synod, that it is impossible for the College to fulfill its mission without providing students with the opportunity to hone their faith. Paul tells us in First Corinthians, chapter sixteen, verse thirteen to "be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong." It is my desire that students that graduate with from Erskine have already had their faith questioned and strengthened. Then, they will have the courage to stand up to the world when the world tries to tear down their faith.

I continue to pray for the wisdom of the Synod and the administration.

**Anthony Wotring  
Class of 2008  
June 16th, 2009**

### **Because of Erskine**

The biggest thing to me is that I see people saying (sometimes complaining – I wish there was a word to express this action without the extremely negative connotation) that they wish their four years at Erskine could have gone differently than it did. But when I look back on my time there, I don't wish that anything would have changed except for me. I wish I could have taken advantage of all that Erskine offered to me. Most of all, I wish I would have learned more. But not once, do I ever feel bad at all towards the faculty. Everyone knows that all of the professors are different. The way I saw it, no one took Crenshaw unless they were spoiling for a fight (he is the “professor” I think most people are mentioning). From what I can tell, most of the people I really respect came out of his class loving him. Just because they got something from him that was totally different from all of the other teachers. He wasn't someone who was just going to let you sit back and say “yea, I'm a Christian,” without challenging that lackadaisical attitude that most of America takes towards our God. (I've gleaned this from other students – not firsthand).

But back to the bigger question, the biggest complaint is that the students feel Erskine is headed in the wrong direction. The idea to me seems that those who feel this way want the Bible to be put into every single class. The way I understood it, the idea of integrating faith into a student's education was by making Bible classes mandatory. The science classes seem to be the most under attack. During my last year, I was seeing the physical signs of this thought taken to its logical procession – to the frustration of one of my history professors. If you want Biblical truth put into every class, it's going to make learning about post-WWII Europe a little disjointed. I also can't see Dr. Thomas easily integrating Bible verses into Instrumental. It's just honestly not easy to do. That's why we take Bible courses and courses in other things.

I know that the last argument may seem a little extreme. But, this is what is being proposed for the Biology classes. And with my experience with Erskine, if you had a disagreement, there isn't a single professor that wouldn't be willing to work through your idea – and more importantly, they would allow you to hold onto your idea even if it ran in the face of theirs. My biggest challenge actually came with the Bible department. There was a seminary professor that I had and I sat through classes taking two sets of notes – what he taught and what I thought was wrong with what he saying. At the time, I hated the class. I even came to a point of wavering in my faith one really lonely night. But I realized something that I wouldn't have because of that class. There is a world of information that I will never fully understand, but faith is something that you choose, not something you learn. I know that as humans we can learn and discover an infinite amount of information, but I believe that there is someone higher than me who created it. This was something I realized about my faith because of Erskine not in spite of Erskine.

So...I come back to my point (if there is one). Erskine is a place where you should be allowed to learn all that you can. It should be left up to the individual what to except and what to disregard. As much as we Christians, we cannot force the world to believe us – even though we are right. Our call is to love all the best we can. I don't see how Christians tearing down (or threatening to close the doors) of a place that should be safe for everyone to find their own beliefs is showing the love of Christ.

**Allison Read  
Class of 2007  
Friday, June 19th, 2009**

### **He Introduced It to Us Nevertheless**

Dr. Crenshaw had a profound effect on my time at Erskine and, therefore, my life. Before I go into any detail, I will say that I took seven classes with Dr. Crenshaw during my four years at EC...so basically, he was a constant in my Erskine experience. I was not at all required to take so many of his classes. I was an English major, yes, but every class I took with him was my choice.

As a first semester freshman, I did not at all expect a professor like Dr. Crenshaw (or, as some of us later came to call him, the Captain). He seemed a little raw on the edges, a bit gruff... not really my idea of someone who would be at Erskine. During that semester, Dr. Crenshaw consistently challenged me to think. Interestingly enough, before meeting the Captain, I was sure that I was a thinker. In the course of one semester (13 wks!), I learned the classic Crenshaw lessons: thinking for myself, getting vs. taking my education, and challenging authority.

One of the first things Dr. Crenshaw told us freshman was to drop out of school, and that we shouldn't be getting an education. This caused an unforgettable uproar! To be at Erskine College, most of us had worked very hard in high school for our grades, and searched high and low for any scholarship to make college affordable. To be told by our own professor that we were wrong was shocking and seemed disheartening. However, there was method to his madness. He was very simply explaining to us that college students straight out of high school do not typically appreciate what they have. And you know what? It's true. Now that I'm out in the real world, away from the so-called "Erskine Bubble," I understand more than ever than I did not appreciate my time at Erskine (or in graduate school at USC, for that matter) as much as I could or should have. Dr. Crenshaw knew that none of us – especially freshmen – were fully able to grasp the idea, but he introduced it to us nevertheless.

That right there is the key: "He introduced it to us nevertheless."

Many students have said that Dr. Crenshaw just likes to start arguments. Well, that is true in a sense – but he always has a reason for it. When he hears a student say something out of ignorance, close-mindedness, or misinformation, he challenges that idea. Not just to be mean, but to bring awareness to that student and the rest of the class. He introduces a concept that may be different from another concept to incite critical thinking, not anger. He just wants his students to think for themselves, and not accept what they're told without question.

It is true that Dr. Crenshaw debates with his students about the Bible. Sometimes the discussion is calm, and sometimes it can get quite heated. If a student loses his faith over these discussions, this certainly cannot be blamed on Dr. Crenshaw. I say this because, outside the Erskine Bubble in the real world, people ask questions about God all the time. If Erskine College promotes evangelical Christianity, should her students not be able to deal with questions of faith and the Bible? Billions of people worldwide want to know why we believe what we believe. If we cannot answer a simple question in a classroom without losing faith, how can we be expected to face the world?

**Rebecca Jones  
Class of 2008  
June 4, 2010**

### **Some Thoughts on Erskine College and My Life**

Christ once said that, “if [my disciples] keep quiet, the stones will cry out” (Luke 19:40, NIV). As I sang at Camp Bonclarken as a child, “Ain’t no rock gonna cry in my place.” There are many literal and figurative rocks and stones on Erskine’s campus, including the One some claim to be absent. I went back to Erskine a few weeks ago for graduation and was reminded of a simple truth while standing on and beneath the rocks and bricks that construct the Erskine Building: Erskine is Home.

When I was four, my dad felt called by God to become a pastor. I was devastated because moving to Due West meant moving away from home. I thought I was leaving home, but in reality, I was coming home. Drinking cherry lemonades in the Kennedy Memorial Garden with Mom, kite-flying behind the Pavilion, and bike-riding on campus sidewalks were a few of the activities I enjoyed. Moving away from Due West was the hardest thing I’d done in my life; leaving Due West has never gotten easy. When I came back to Due West for college, I didn’t have much directional advantage over anyone else. I could find Main Street, but who couldn’t? Over the next few years, locations like the Mall, the Quad, and the Circle became more to me than places: they became Home. Whenever I stand under the Towers or in my garden by the Erskine Building, I feel a sense of belonging that I have never felt anywhere else. The reason for this is not political, ecclesiastical, or overly complicated: Erskine is Home.

Feelings and sentiments can only go so far, however. Explaining to others about how I get the warm fuzzies while walking across campus is not going to convince anyone that Erskine is already fulfilling her mission. Since there are no official definitions or criteria for the catchphrase, “integration of faith and learning,” I trust that the following examples of how I witnessed professors integrating faith and learning at Erskine will not be dismissed.

As an English major, I spent much time learning about how theology and faith impacted literature from different time periods. Dr. Crenshaw lectured about the role of clergy during the time of Chaucer. Dr. Little is well-versed in how Elizabethan theology influenced Shakespeare’s literature. Dr. Christie taught about the often-present theme of theory versus experience not only in literature but also in faith and practice. Dr. Reames was excellent at spotting Christian allegory in poetry even when most of the class missed it. Science class gave me a profound appreciation for God’s creation if not an aptitude for identifying flora and fauna. While every class was not a theological debate, I was never ridiculed for my beliefs. All of my science professors were fine professors and fine people. While their tests sometimes intimidated me, they themselves did not. Dr. Gettys taught us about Christian influence on everything from art to architecture; I can still remember acing the section on one of his tests about the theological significance behind the methods used to build a basilica. He also told us about the time when he got stuck on a dirt road in his truck during a thunderstorm and feared for his life just like Martin Luther feared for his. While the story was humorous, it helped us visualize Martin Luther’s predicament in a new way. I learned much from the numerous theology classes I took at Erskine; I took and enjoyed several of Dr. Evans’ classes. This is only a small sample of specific examples; there are many more I could mention if I had the space.

Speaking of specifics, I feel compelled to make a few points about Dr. Crenshaw. The amount of theology and politics we agreed on while I was at Erskine could probably fit in one of those ~~shot-glasses~~ toothpick holders the bookstore used to sell. However, I chose to take his classes. Dr. Crenshaw was my academic advisor for all four years; he helped me make many academic decisions in spite of my less than stellar decision-making skills. While we disagreed on most of the theology and politics that we discussed in class, Dr. Crenshaw cared not so much that I disagreed with him but that I knew why I disagreed with him. Dr. Crenshaw's classes are easy to avoid. A non-major only needs to take two two-hundred-level survey classes to meet the basic graduation requirement. As Erskine has four English professors that all teach such classes (as well as higher-level classes that would also meet the basic requirement), taking Dr. Crenshaw is not necessary. As an English major, I probably could have made it through all four years without taking a class with Dr. Crenshaw. An offended student can simply drop his class and choose another or stay away altogether. If Dr. Crenshaw says something with which a student disagrees, the student is not obligated to believe him.

While I have had excellent teachers and professors, God has most often used my best friends to reach me. Not only did God give me excellent professors at Erskine; He also gave me the best friends I've ever had. At Erskine, my closest friends at Erskine were Presbyterians of different stripes, Baptists, and Nazarenes. We had some spirited theological debates, but our love for each other and, most importantly, for God kept us from permanent estrangement. While theology was important, God's personal workings in our lives usually made clear to us that He had brought us together to love and care for one another regardless of theological differences. While my friends differ from me theologically, they are still some of the finest Christians I have ever known. I once told my Nazarene friend that although I was the ARP, she was the one who was trying to reform me through her personal example. As she is now, Erskine College is a place where a Nazarene can reform an ARP through genuine Christian commitment; that is part of what makes Erskine great.

No place makes me feel at home like Erskine, but Bonclarken is a close second. When I stand outside the Heidelberg and look down towards the lake, I remember Camp Bonclarken, visits with my grandparents, wedding receptions, and other such occasions. "Bonclarken" means "good, clear vision," and that is what I have been praying God will provide for this Synod meeting. I am praying that, by God's grace, Erskine College will remain a place where professors can impact students' lives in and out of the classroom. I pray that Erskine will remain a place where theological differences are viewed not as weaknesses but as opportunities for learning about the Christian commitment of others of other denominations. I pray that Erskine will stay a place where God teaches His people how to love and care for one another in the true spirit of Pr.17:17: "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." I pray that the men of Synod will make a personal effort to get to know my Erskine family and my home because Erskine's measure cannot be taken with reports and surveys. Please, Lord, give others the good, clear vision to see that Erskine is a place that lives up to the first stanza of Bible Song 280, "Christian Unity":

Behold, how good a thing it is  
And how becoming well,  
Together such as brethren are  
In unity to dwell!  
In unity to dwell!

Rebecca Jones  
Class of 2008

**Jenny Blakely  
Class of 2007  
June 10th, 2009**

### **In Defense of Professor Bill Crenshaw**

There is a difference between teaching someone how to think and teaching someone what to think. I would argue, in fact, that teaching someone what to think is the enemy of teaching someone how to think. Only one of these things will sustain a student; only one of these things will implore a student to search more, to employ a thirst for knowledge.

I've been outside of the so-called "Erskine Bubble" for two years now. In that time, I have continued my education at another institution, the Medical University of South Carolina. In that time, too, I have come to appreciate that Dr. Crenshaw is not "out of his mind," as others have alleged. Dr. Crenshaw is merely a man who wants his students to appreciate thought. Outside of Erskine, at other academic institutions, one does not get the luxury of debating evolution. As Crenshaw himself puts it, evolution is not a BELIEF. It is a theory. A theory well accepted by most. One does not choose to believe a theory; one accepts it, or one does not.

But most accept it. Especially in science. Especially in the face of all of the overwhelming evidence that evolution does, in fact, occur—by the day, minute, second. And it is beautiful to behold, to watch nature as it twists and adapts.

What Crenshaw wants his students to do is face the reality of this beautiful world around them. To think about what things mean, to think about science and nature and beauty, as well as to think about writing and literature, about all things that are worthwhile. He does not claim to be without biases; he provokes students to examine their own. He wants us to challenge our assumptions—to consider the difficult side of things. For life is made up of difficult things. And the more you know about any certain thing, the less you can be certain of your position on it. This is something that my two years outside of Erskine has taught me, as well.

Dr. Crenshaw is an insidiously good teacher, unbelievably talented. My mother—who attended Erskine as well—loves to tell the stories of her classes with Dr. Crenshaw. She continually recounts that she "couldn't write to please him." In her first class with him, she was given a C. In her second class, a B. The third class she took with him, an A. It is obvious, to me, in this story, that the one who didn't change was Dr. Crenshaw. It is my mother who changed, who improved; she went from writing in such a way that she "couldn't please him," to such a way in which she obviously did. This story embodies, to me, Dr. Crenshaw's commitment to the education of his students. You cannot get around in this hectic world unless you can communicate. He gave my mother that gift. Or rather, as he would say, he inspired her to take it for herself.

I watched Dr. Crenshaw weave miracles. I watched, in my Fiction Writing Class, as he took a terrible story and molded it into something passable. I saw him take pieces of fiction from students who were obviously taking the class for an easy "pass," and spend time with them. It would have been easier to take these stories at face value—half-assed barely-coherent tripe. It would be easier for him to do what those of us who actually wanted to be there did—ignore them, read them aloud to each other in stupid over-dramatic voices. But he took time with them. He

fixed them. He said, in not so many words, “You are my student, and I am your teacher. I will lead by example. We will do this together.”

But in the end, it was not the attention, not the time commitment or the constant implorings to think, that made the difference. It was that Dr. Crenshaw cared, and that he paid attention. In my last J-term at Erskine, I took more than my allotted absences from his class. I wrote him a letter, apologized. I mentioned that I’d had some rough life events, that I had found it difficult to get out of bed. He wrote back:

Life is not part of college; college is part of life.

Sometimes other parts of life elbow college out of the way for a while.

Life happens.

He reminded me that grief and depression are different beasts; that I should look out for one as opposed to the other. He was right. I was deep in the throes of what I now know is atypical depression. Two months later, I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. He was paying attention. He CARED.

I honestly cannot describe to anyone who does not already know, who has not experienced this, how refreshing and—literally—life-saving it is to have someone as aware, caring, and loving as Dr. Crenshaw in your life when you are in a time of dire need.

Bill Crenshaw is—and has been, in his entire service to Erskine College, in his entire service to the students of Erskine College—an exemplary model of an educator, mentor and friend. I don’t care much to judge his religious faith, but I can speak volumes about his faith in me and about his faith in other students. He deserves praise and recognition for all of the work he’s done, and he deserves none of the disrespect he has been subject to constantly for the past several years. He has exerted a lasting and overwhelmingly positive influence over my life—academically, as a scholar and a writer, but personally, as someone whose mind is no longer cracked. And I, for one, will stand up and thank him.

**Jason Nussbaum**  
**Class of 2006**

**Some Thoughts on and Memories of Erskine College**

With all of the events in the last few months, an interesting concept has been forming in my ever-feeble brain. Who's will are we truly seeking? The ARP Synod, the moderators commission, SAFE, and others have made accusations that the college is intimidating its students into a certain belief system. They have argued extensively that there are professors who are adamant about their beliefs, and that those beliefs are being forced onto those in attendance of their courses. They want to be able to think in ways consistent with their personal faith, and don't want to be challenged by someone who thinks differently than they.

My question is, if all of the professors at Erskine are only allowed to teach the doctrines of the ARP church, is that not a culture of intimidation in itself? These folks want to be able to think their way, and not be questioned, but they can't have their cake and eat it too. I would argue that mandating professors to only teach the HUMAN interpretations of God's word that have been established by this denomination would in itself be a culture of intimidation. You can argue that you want free thought all day, but what they really want is for their thoughts to be the only ones taught. The only true freedom of thought comes through a personal loving relationship with Jesus Christ, who speaks into the hearts of those who are truly committed to serving Him.

As a non-ARP student, the views I brought to Erskine were very different from the ARP church. As I learned and matured, I realized that my denomination has many of the same problems as the ARP church. Each denomination wants to make its claim on Christianity, so we all pick our top priorities and focus on them. We become so adamant about OUR way becoming THE way that we lose sight on the Gospel. For my denomination it was things like dancing, alcohol, clothing, and music. For the ARP church one could argue its formality, pre-destination, and conformity of thought.

When I came to Erskine, my beliefs were challenged. The fact is that the Church (not just the ARP) fails to challenge the beliefs of its members because it's too afraid to offend or run off those who don't see on its level. The Church is concerned with creating a culture where everyone believes the same things, has the same preferences, and acts the same way. That is not the Church that Paul describes in Acts. Erskine did for me what the Church failed to do. Erskine challenged my beliefs and made me take my faith to a personal level, and to discover that what is taught and demonstrated in today's congregations is often not what is at the heart of God's word.

My challenge is that the ARP church, Erskine, and everyone involved take an earnest look into what God's will is for this college. Can a Christian institution promote high standards of academics and knowledge while maintaining a Christian influence directed towards its students? I believe it can. Can a church support an educational institution through love, prayer, service, and devotion to her without re-creating the church in a different societal realm? I believe it can.

My concern is that the outspoken individuals who are bashing the ways of Erskine are not truly devoted in love, prayer, and service to her, or to God. God does not, through His word, call us to beat non-believers over the head with our doctrines and systematic theology. He does not call us to prove to others that our interpretations and personal stand is the only way. He does not need us to defend the Word He has given to us...HIS WORD DEFENDS ITSELF! He does call us to love Him so much that there is no other possibility than for His love, that He pours back into us,

to be overflow onto the lost and dying world around us.

Are there faculty, staff, and administrators at Erskine who are Christians but have lost sight of their need to make decisions that completely reflect God's calling on their lives? I believe there are. Do these folks need to experience the love of Jesus just as much as you and I do?

Absolutely! The sad part, though, is that the pressure from the ARP church to make decisions that keep PEOPLE happy has reduced the ability of the administration to make decisions that are pleasing to GOD. Only God should have control and influence over the intentions and thoughts of a man's heart...not a pastor, church, denomination, or board.

God does not always call us to do things that "make sense." He does not call us to make sure we don't offend anyone else while we act in obedience to His commands for our lives. He does not call us to rely on explanations made by man; He calls us to rely on His word, His voice, and His presence and to respond in obedience to the vision He creates in each of us. Only when the ARP Church and the Erskine Administration decide its time to focus completely on God's will, and unite under His vision and His will for their personal lives, and for the life of this wonderful college, will we ever see an Erskine that truly thrives.

I believe with all my heart that God has done great things, and has a plan for Erskine that none of us can fathom. Lying is not excusable when it's done to exert the will of God on others. We are not to lie about people and situations to ensure that God's word becomes the utmost authority over anything. We are called to love God, to obey His commands, and to accept His Word as the ultimate authority over our lives. God doesn't need any individual to re-create or enforce His will, His commands, or His standards. He doesn't NEED anything from any of us...He only WANTS us to love Him.

**David Dangerfield**  
**Class of 2005**  
**SGA President '04-'05**  
**June 12th, 2009**

**A Letter to President Ruble and the Erskine Board of Trustees**

Dear President Ruble, Chairman-Elect Mitchell, and Board of Trustees,

We are all aware of the controversy at Erskine College sparked by groups such as SAFE and ARP Talk. Their attacks on both my alma mater and the fulfillment of its mission are quite disappointing behavior. I believe that the views these groups espouse, while well intended, are in fact radical interpretations for Erskine's mission – and push the college's identity beyond anything that Erskine was ever meant to be. Undoubtedly Erskine still has room to improve, and some current problems are symptoms of a time of financial need. Yet, I still believe there is much to celebrate and to strengthen in what Erskine College really is: a warm and nurturing Christian college and a solid academic institution committed to learning, integrity, and academic freedom. This reality is the Erskine so many cherish, and the Erskine that I pray will survive this storm.

After encountering this group's petition, I nearly signed it – until I also saw their websites and online video. I could not believe my eyes. From their unfounded attacks on Robyn Agnew to their stated wish that Erskine not admit “so many” non-believers and to their call to employ only reformed evangelical professors, I could find no semblance of Christian spirit. Where in such statements is the Great Commission? Where in these public and personal assaults on individuals is Matthew 18? And still, I believe these students and alumni are well intentioned, but misguided by their group's leaders. Friends have even told me that they were misled into signing that petition, not knowing the agenda that came with it. Rather than foster a constructive discussion, it appears that an “us versus them” mentality and confusion have emerged from these movements. And, after talking with fellow alumni and current students, I firmly believe that SAFE and ARP Talk do not reflect the whole of the Erskine community.

For my part, SAFE and ARP Talk in no way represent my Erskine experience, neither as student nor as an involved alumnus. I have always believed that Erskine is special, in part, because it has such a strong commitment to both spiritual and academic growth. It is a Christian institution without the extremes that my theology professor warned against: “being so heavenly minded that it is of no earthly good.” As a student, it was sometimes difficult to understand the importance of academic freedom and discussions that pushed me beyond my comfort zone. Certainly The Greatest Teacher was known to push His disciples beyond their comfort zones, and Erskine's faculty do well to take this lead. Whether presenting biology, history, or politics, the faculty and their challenging discussions developed my intellect, honed my spirituality, and helped prepare me for the world outside of Due West. Sure, at times I was asked to defend my beliefs and consider unpopular theories, but I am confident that these encounters made me a stronger Christian. At the end of the day, we cannot afford to limit discussions and perspectives in Erskine's classrooms. Such extremism would severely hamper our students' development as scholars and individuals. They must be prepared to take on the world's challenges, equipped with experience and taught to develop their own discernment. Moreover, our academic reputation

relies on its exercise of respectful freedom, and our students must be challenged if they ever hope to grow.

I could go on for pages. I could tell you how much Bill Crenshaw, Sandy Chaney, and Jim Gettys meant to me when I was a student. They are just some of the faculty who nurtured me as a scholar and as a young man. But, I know you have much to consider. So, in the interest of time let me say this. One of the hardest and most tear-filled days of my life was Commencement. I felt that day as though something was being taken from me while I watched and I did not want to leave Erskine. In some ways, what I feared has come true. My classmates and friends are no longer just down the hall or laughing in the student center. Yet, it is also fair to say that while I left Erskine, Erskine has never, and will never, leave me. I am proud of my alma mater and the way that it accomplishes its mission. While some decry what Erskine should be, I am confident there is no failure in its academic and Christian commitments. Erskine is Erskine, glorious and true.

I urge the college, its Board of Trustees, and the ARP Synod to seek truth rather than the extremes in this storm, to protect Erskine's Christian community while also remaining faithful to its identity as a liberal arts college. And thank you, particularly, Dr. Ruble, for your courage and commitment.

Forever Connected in Christ, Learning, and Life, I am

Sincerely,

David Dangerfield  
Class of 2005

**Jennifer Boggs Baker**  
**Class of 2005**  
**June 18th, 2009**

**Everybody's Got an Erskine Story - Here's Mine**

Dear Dr. Ruble, Erskine Administration, and Board of Trustees,

It has come to my attention that there is much controversy going on in Due West about my alma mater. I am writing this letter in defense of Erskine College. I graduated from Erskine four years ago with a little over 150 members of the class of 2005. Many of the professors I had are no longer there. All of the students who were freshmen when I was a senior have graduated and moved on. I can not name one student there at this time. However, my heart is still with Erskine and with that passion, I ask that you take my letter into consideration.

First of all, I hear of many (or at least one person through a posted YouTube video) who wish Erskine would not admit as many non-Christians, as it is felt that this makes Erskine more secular. I could not disagree more. While I was a student at Erskine, I had several friends who found Christ and knew many, so many whose faith became so much stronger and so much deeper through Christian outreach on campus. Who is to say that since these students were non-Christians they should not have had the opportunity to attend Erskine and later find Christ? Did Jesus only preach and reach out to those who were already believers? We are to be witnesses to others, and we know God has a plan for each individual. If God's plan places a non-believing student at Erskine, it is without a doubt for a purpose. Our place should not be to exclude him or her but to be a witness. It's like an old quote my grandfather (Erskine '58) used to tell me: We may be the only Bible he or she ever reads.

Secondly, I also read on a site's post where someone actually documented notes from a history class where comments were made about religion. I am a teacher in a public school, and while I can not preach and I can not spread God's word in certain ways by law, my students know I love God. They see me pray every morning and before every meal. They hear me talk about what I did at church. Just because I'm not quoting scripture does not make me a lesser Christian and I don't believe it makes Erskine professors into lesser Christians or lesser educators. While I loved the fact that Erskine focused on Christian commitment and academic excellence, every class I took at Erskine was not taught with a mention of Jesus every single day. I don't think it needed to. Erskine was a Christian environment that supported my every need and guided me on my faithful path. It was also a highly academic environment which focused on teaching me what I needed to know in order to be successful in my future career and taught me, not only how to be a student, but to be a thinker.

This group has also taken shots at Erskine's faculty and administration. In the arena of personal attacks, certain faculty members have been targeted. Let me take the time to discuss one such professor who helped guide me on my academic path and simultaneously helped me develop my faith. There were many debates in Dr. Crenshaw's classroom and he tended to fuel them by making you think (i.e. taking the opposite point of view for discussion). I will be honest: during my first class with this professor, I was frustrated; however after my second class, it clicked. I got it; I understood his purpose in teaching this way. He didn't teach his students to have his opinion. Dr. Crenshaw taught his students to HAVE an opinion. He wanted to make us think and make us defend what we thought by articulating our position. In part to his teaching, it is not at

all surprising to me that as of this very moment, there is a Facebook group of over 380 Erskine alumni (and growing) who are voicing their opinions. This group of alumni believes in Erskine and not just in the romanticized visions we have of our college days. This group of alumni is coming together to defend Erskine, what it stands for, how it helped shape our lives, and how we hope it will remain for students to come. We have opinions, we know what we believe, and how to articulate it. We believe in Erskine.

Finally, I get the feeling that a lot of this fight started when Erskine developed the slogan “Forever Connected Through Christ, Learning, and Life.” Many felt this took away from Erskine’s Christian commitment, and I strongly disagree. I think it makes Erskine seem more like a family, which is exactly how it felt to me. David Dangerfield once rephrased a saying that I know resonates with so many: “Due West isn’t where I’m from. But the first time I ever knew myself, that is where I was living.” I do feel forever connected to Erskine, and for you to understand that I need to tell you my Erskine story.

As a senior in high school, I applied to both large public colleges in SC, a couple in between, and then I had to pick one closer to home. I got in to all six places I applied but ended up choosing Erskine. At the time it felt a bit more like luck of the draw and it was closest to home for someone who was a mama’s girl like me.

Luck of the draw... how wrong I was.

Erskine ended up being a God-send. I didn’t fit inside the big “Erskine bubble.” While at Erskine, I was outside the bubble and inside several small ones. I am not a member of the ARP church; I am of the United Methodist denomination. At the same time, I was an Athenian, an ed major, a student senate member, dated a baseball player, played intramurals, etc. When I think of Erskine, I think of places. Carnegie’s lobby is where we watched the news on the morning of September 11, 2001. Carnegie is where I met some of the girls who would become my best friends. Bonner’s second floor is where my hair was teased and bottles of hairspray were used for big hair night when I rushed Athenian. Euphie Hall is where I later would sit as Athenian president. The circle is where I ran around like a little kid in a huge snowball fight, and the hill by the baseball field is where I went sledding on lunch trays when it snowed during my junior year. Moffatt is where I ate sizzlin’ salads with my friends on Thursdays after convo, and Watkins is where I always studied for history and Bible. The Erskine building is where I spent most of my days as an education major. The library is where we played hide-and-seek after hours one time when a friend was closing the library, and the baseball field is where I watched my boyfriend pitch for the Flying Fleet.

Four years later, several of those friends I made were bridesmaids at my wedding. Those hours in the Erskine Building paid off as I just finished my fourth year as an elementary school teacher. The fact that I was in the library back then was a small miracle, but a couple summers ago I used that library again – to work on a major research project for my Masters work while attending Clemson University. The boyfriend I watched as he played for Erskine is now a teacher and coaches baseball at the high school level. He’s also my husband of two years and the father of our two-month-old son.

I loved Erskine and I know things change. I often say I would love to go back to Erskine but I would literally have to go back because I would only want to go if it were with the exact same people at the exact same time. I grew so much as a person there. My understanding and kindness were enriched through relationships with others. My faith became so much stronger. My life

became so much richer. It hurts me to think that the place I loved and the place that made such an impact on my life is both changing and trying to be changed even more by others.

I am proud to say that four years after Erskine, I am a Christian girl who loves and serves her church. I am the wife of a wonderful husband whom I met at Erskine. I am the mother of a precious baby boy who can expect to hear many of these Erskine stories. I am the granddaughter of a man who was also an alumnus of Erskine but sadly did not live to see me graduate from his alma mater. I am the daughter of a man who watched the first person in his family graduate from college when I walked across that stage under the towers. I am the sister of a boy who used to visit me in my dorm. I am the teacher of a classroom of 20 six-year-olds each year who are better prepared because their teacher learned from Dr. Emery and Dr. Jumper. I am a friend to those whom I met through my Erskine experience and to those who are still connected to me even though distance parts us. I am so blessed that I am an Erskine alumna and will defend her as she deserves.

If I can be of any service to my alma mater, please let me know.

With deepest support and appreciation,

Jennifer Boggs Baker  
(Class of 2005)

**Robert Whetsell,  
Class of 2005  
June 11th, 2009**

**A Letter to President Ruble**

Dr. Ruble,

Good evening. I recently found out about a group called SAFE (Students Aligned for a Faithful Erskine) that seems to be publicly lamenting Erskine's perceived lack of pervasive evangelical Christianity. I wanted to let you know that this group does not speak for me or for most of my former classmates at Erskine. I came to Erskine in 2001 from a Christian high school, a high school which effectively ostracized anyone who didn't strongly profess to a southern conservative brand of evangelical Christianity. Erskine was not this way. At Erskine, I encountered a variety of world views, both from my fellow students and from faculty members. I believe that this exposure played a hugely positive role in my development as a learner and a citizen, particularly when coupled with the excellent instruction I received in many of my classes.

I would ask you to continue to preserve Erskine's tradition of being a place where believers, non believers, and everyone in between can come together to get an excellent education untarnished by narrow ideological considerations. All of the best professors I had at Erskine (Drs. Thomas, Smith, Eves, Greer, Baker, Manning, Schmelzenbach, Bruce, and others) showed their faith by consistently working hard and holding us to a higher standard. I think their dedication to learning spoke much louder than any disclaimer they would have given about evolution.

Thank you for your time, and keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

Robert Whetsell  
Class of '05, Chemistry

**Rockel Cole Bower**  
**Class of 2005**  
**June 13th, 2009**

**A Letter to President Ruble**

Dr. Ruble,

My name is Rockel Bower, formally Rockel (Rocky) Cole. I was an EB Kennedy scholar for the class of 2005 before I (quite abruptly) quit Erskine College in the spring of 2007. I left Erskine after just over a year and a half. Early in my freshman year Robyn Agnew recognized I needed help at a time when I was unwilling to battle the depression and bulimia I had struggled with since I was a preteen. I left because I knew I needed that help, and that was all I could focus on at the time. I never shared this reasoning with anyone at Erskine, or with Crosland Stuart when she came to check on me. Most people assume I was unhappy at Erskine, and I left for that reason, and I allowed them to believe that because of my own embarrassment. I learned more in my short time at Erskine, than I did in the 17+ years prior and have in the 2 years since about becoming a well reasoned adult.

I was a student who came from a non-Christian home, I however was a Christian. I believed in the fundamentals of the Christian Faith. The summer after my graduation from high school, I went through several personal traumas and almost didn't come to Erskine in the fall. At the urging of my fiance (who is now my loving husband and adoring father), I reluctantly started college. That first day at Erskine, without my fiancee or my best friend, who had become the rocks I leaned on, was absolutely miserable. I felt like a duck in a sea of swans. I had lost most of my faith, and felt like a fraud. My second day, that feeling changed. During freshman orientation, I remembered why I had fallen in love with Erskine and with Christianity to begin with. There were no ducks and no swans. There were people, of all kinds, who harbored no judgement towards each other no matter the differences in faith or background. I made some amazing friends, and met people who have forever changed my life. More importantly, the renewed faith in God I found during my freshman year was invigorating. This faith was not because anyone told me I had to believe, or I was wrong not to. It was also not because every faculty member agreed with it, or reminded me of it. It was because the faculty, and the students following the example of those faculty, showed me in their actions that God is forgiving and loves us unconditionally. Christian faith is not an exclusive club, and it is not an all or nothing choice. The passion for the Lord I felt in every aspect of my life at Erskine, resonating from every faculty member, regardless of their demeanor, was the thing that helped to pull me back to the Lord.

Every faculty member I encountered, whether in a course or just in passing, had a strong desire to instill in their students more than just academic material. We were challenged to become free thinkers, capable of reasoning and intelligent argument. In the real world you must be able to defend your point of view, not just declare it. I was challenged to defend my faith several times while at Erskine by faculty. This was not meant to discourage that faith, but rather to encourage me to know enough about my faith to be able to defend it when asked. Prior to Erskine, I had been told about Christianity and the Bible. I had never been taught. When I took Old Testament, I learned more than just what books are included and what passages are written on their pages. I learned what they meant, and how they applied to me. I learned how to understand the Old Testament in the way the Lord meant for me to understand it.

I took two history classes in my time at Erskine. Neither of those classes were bible based; neither of them were taught from the ignorant mindset that unless you are talking about the Bible, you are not teaching Christianity. I do not recall ever hearing Dr. Grier speak about his faith or the Lord directly. What I do remember is the passion with which he taught. I remember knowing that I was going to learn more than just a date each time I walked into his classroom. I was going to learn about something that happened to shape the world I live in. I was going to learn the implications and the effects, and how to think about that event critically, and in turn, how to think about any event in the same way. By the time I finished with my first history class, I had learned how to understand history in a way that I had never understood it before. My first year at Erskine, I learned what it truly meant to be made in His likeness as Gen 1:26 states. The courses I took that were not at all related to my faith or the Bible (English, Chemistry, History, etc), taught me how to learn and to think intelligently. I am sure that in order to be in the likeness of God, as he intended, we must be intelligent. A college that teaches strictly one sided beliefs and refuses to foster debate, is molding well versed Christians, not intelligent ones.

In my short time at Erskine, I learned how to be an intelligent person, an intelligent Christian. I may not be able to recite scripture in the way people who graduate from colleges like the one SAFE would like created can. I can however think intelligently, and it took the diversity and intellect, in addition to the belief structure, of all of the faculty at Erskine to mold me into an intelligent person. Anyone who understands that God is intelligent can see that it takes more than just a Bible and someone reciting it to mold us into the people God would have us to be.

God created us in His likeness, not in the likeness of tape recorders. I am glad that I got to attend an Erskine that understood that, and exposed me to a faculty with diverse beliefs so that I too could understand.

Thank you,

Rocky

**Greg Guzauskas**  
**Class of 2001**  
**June 14th, 2009**

**A letter to President Ruble**

Greetings Dr. Ruble,

My name is Greg Guzauskas, class of 2001. You are no doubt being inundated with letters of concern from alumni that are upset about the actions of this SAFE group. I wish to add my name to that list.

I may be remembered by faculty and staff at Erskine as having one of the more 'colorful' personalities they have had to deal with. I was not then and am not now a spiritual and/or religious person. From this statement you can imagine I am deeply disturbed by the direction this misguided group wants to take the school.

As a biology major and philosophy minor at Erskine, I easily embraced the concepts taught to me by my professors David Ritland, Mary Lang Edwards, and Benjamin Farley (though they will doubtless remember I did not embrace my studies!), including evolution and its mechanism, genetics. Even then, a number of my classmates were resistant to the facts they were presented, but nonetheless performed admirably in the classroom while maintaining a respectful relationship with their instructors. I never understood how anyone could disregard the theory of evolution while desiring a career in the sciences, but anyone that undertakes that path is at least prepared to interact intelligently with the near complete majority of practicing scientists that share this rigorously tested and applied worldview.

These topics are the fundamental essences of biological science, and any serious inquiry into the basis of them will uncover mountains of data, analyses, and discarded notions that did not survive scientific scrutiny.

This SAFE group has the nerve to claim they desire a school where they can experience the 'academic' pursuit of knowledge, all within an underdeveloped notion of an ideal Christian environment. They do not realize that the nature of academia, as it has been practiced for centuries, is to rigorously question preconceptions of truth to expose falsehoods and refine our understanding. It's not taking a break in science class to have a baseless, misplaced theological discussion when the facts being presented don't sit well.

Science isn't made up out of thin air, as they might wish to think. Science is also not the plot of secularists or Satan himself to undermine the teachings of Jesus. If God exists, he has evidently blessed us with the tools, ability, and desire to uncover the mysteries of the universe he has created. But he did not make it easy. If any of these agitators saw what goes on at serious institutions, among professional geneticists, biophysicists, anthropologists, etc, they would be stunned by the level of complexity and the amount of evidence that is necessary to back up a scientific finding. If evidence is lacking, a scientist can and will be skewered by his/her colleagues. If only they knew how naive they sound.

Anyone with a 'mature' faith in any religion should know how to separate their faith from the logic and reason purportedly against it. One's faith does not exist if there is a need to prove it, or

if it is rattled by the world in which one lives. I would argue that faith and scientific reason are two completely different sides of the same coin, and mixing the two accomplishes little and fouls up a lot. That said, they are perfectly capable of coexistence. Anyone that doubts that sentiment should be encouraged to read Francis Collins's book "The Language of God"; most should know Dr. Collins as the Christian principal investigator of the Human Genome Project.

I wish to make one last comment. I am currently a doctoral student at the University of Washington studying public health genetics. Prior to this I received a master's degree in health policy from the University of North Carolina. These institutions naturally play a more prominent role in my professional credentials than my undergraduate studies, but I recoil at the thought of having to explain to anyone that I went to a school that openly disavows accepted knowledge for a preferred version of history/reality that imparts impractical and antiquated skill sets to its students. I do not state this as an accusation—none of this has yet come to pass—but I do warn against it. Please do not give undue credence to this silly group of students.

Thank you, and please feel free to pass this along to the Board.

Gregory F. Guzauskas, MSPH  
Doctoral Student  
Institute for Public Health Genetics  
University of Washington  
Seattle, WA

**Amanda Lawson Dale  
Class of 1996  
March 13, 2010**

**A Letter to the ARP Synod, the Alumni Association, and Dr. Randy Ruble**

To Whom it May Concern:

It is with a heavy heart that I have made the decision to support the Erskine College Alumni Association in its law suit against the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Synod. I also realize that I am but one voice, my gift of \$18.39 is simple yet symbolic, and by myself I may be ignored, but I feel making my reasons known may help those Erskine supporters who are “on the fence”, so to speak.

In the fall of 1991, after a long drive and getting lost along the way, my mother and I stepped foot on the Erskine Campus, very late, and very tired. My mother had recently injured her ankle and was unable to walk much. Jeff Craft and Bill Lesesne put my mother in a golf cart and trekked her throughout the campus without thought. She received one on one time with them as they answered her many questions, with the major one being, “How does your college feel about accepting a member of the LDS Church?”

The surprising thing was the college encouraged my acceptance. It did not matter what faith I came from, nor did it matter what background I had. To Erskine, I had what was needed to become a successful student, citizen, and later Christian. Forget the fact that my family was a poor family from Saluda County, South Carolina, where no one in the family had ever completed college. Forget that at the time I worshipped not God, but an unknown named Joseph Smith. Forget the fact that I had no means to pay an \$18,000 per year tuition bill. I was welcomed into the fold and that was enough for them.

My first semester at Erskine in the fall of 1992 was dramatic for me. I remember liking only one class—Dr. Nancy Erickson’s Western Civilization class. I remember feeling lost, tired all the time, and sad. It was during that semester that I learned my father had chronic lymphocytic leukemia. I was continuing to go to the LDS (Mormon) church in Greenwood, where I was told I was not engaging in enough works and that perhaps I should even give up college. Of course, Dr. Crenshaw had angered enough that semester with his typical “You all shouldn’t be here” speech, that I did not leave. I was going to prove a point. Slowly, throughout that first year, there were glimmers of light. Cris (Cobb) Richardson’s room became a haven where the clamps of the Mormon Church were slowly being chipped away. I began enjoying spending time in my work study in the Education Offices with Mrs. Zelda Oates, Dr. Henry Hollingsworth, and the man who would one day become my husband. Light was starting to break through the darkness. Eventually, light broke completely through, and throughout the last three years of college, big changes happened in my life. After a Bible study in the spring of 1994, I sat in Hannah (Rambo) Pifer’s dorm room in Kennedy Hall, I was fighting the inevitability of my renunciation of the Mormon faith and grasp of the Reformed Christian faith. I had not make it there yet, but close to sixteen years later, her words ring clearly in my mind, “You want to believe. I can see it in your eyes. You just have to take that step.” Last year I told her how profound those words were for me. They were a turning point. Less than a year later, I became a Christian. I asked the Lord into my heart during a Bible Study at Erskine College. It was a quiet prayer, just Him and me, but it

was said, nonetheless.

One may say that the events that led me to becoming a Christian would have happened without Bible Studies at Erskine College, or meeting people at Erskine, or the buildings or professors. I am sure that since God chose me to be His (Romans 8:30; Ephesians 1:4-5, 11), He would have made Himself known where ever I would end up. Consider this, however: at Erskine, one of the most instrumental persons God used in my life was Hannah, a young lady from Winnsboro, South Carolina. One of my best friends there was Mary Lee Hodges ('97), also from Winnsboro. Winnsboro has a rich history with Erskine College. The man who became my husband (another Erskine graduate) went to teach school in Winnsboro. He and I were baptized, confirmed members, married, gave birth to our first Covenant child, and saw her baptized at Salem Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Blair, South Carolina. The pastor at this church was then and is still Mary Lee's father, Richard Hodges. While in Winnsboro, Daniel ('93) taught alongside Hannah's mother. All of these happenings are too good to be coincidence. They are that way because God wanted us at Erskine at the time we were all there to fulfill His plan which is still being unfurled before us.

The members of the ARP Synod and particularly Students Aligned for a Faithful Erskine (SAFE) would have students like me not come to Erskine at all. They would have Erskine closed to all but a select few. They would have professors not question why people believe as they do, because the questioning did not only get directed against believers. Dr. Bill Crenshaw, Dr. David Grier, Dr. Nancy Erickson, Dr. Henry Hollingsworth, Dr. Ben Farley, and Mrs. Cheryl Light Shriener all challenged me to defend Mormonism and in that challenging and soul-searching, I found myself falling short. I found truth does not change, whichever way I try to spin it. In short, I did indeed discover the inerrancy of the Bible, the very thing this fight started with. Our current pastor at First Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Dillon, SC, likes to refer to Francis Schaeffer's coinage here—"true truth". And that's what I found at Erskine: "true truth"! I am certainly no big fan of Dr. Crenshaw's (sorry), but I am grateful for a two things as far as he is concerned: first, I'm grateful that he challenged me to question myself, because I think I probably would have dropped out of Erskine and moved on to college at Brigham Young University otherwise; second, he convinced me to step away from my first chosen English major. He may have not been my favorite professor at the time, but I can genuinely see how God used him to direct me in better paths!

One of the major reasons why I have battled with my decision to stand across the lines against SAFE is Joshua Grimm. Josh and his family were members of First Presbyterian Church in Dillon, SC, when I needed them to be. Josh's father, Jeff Grimm, was my mother's last physician before her untimely death at the age of 54 in 2002. It's with a heavy heart I stand across the lines from the son of such a Godly, loving man, who cared for my mother in her last days. This man prayed with her and for her, spent more time with my family than any doctor ever should, and kept the church informed when we couldn't. In short, the presence of the Grimm family in our lives was something ordained by God. I found myself looking at the website for SAFE, realizing who was standing on the side of SAFE and rethinking my position. This was when I thought about my mother, the kindness the Erskine staff had given to her, and her conversion to the faith just days before she went to be with the Lord.

These memories also led me to a reminder that with her death and my father's subsequent death six months to the day later, I changed my method of prayer. That was when Philippians 4:4-9 entered. That's when I stopped praying for my will, but His will be done and that the "peace of God [would] be with [me]." (Phil 4:9) For the first time in months, I looked at those verses.

What is truly true, noble, right, pure, lovely, excellent, or praiseworthy (Phil 4:8) about the actions of the General Synod? Reading the Bylaws of the College led me to the realization that Board Members indeed were not removed in the way wise men well before my time determined was God's will.

Where are we without lost sheep like I was at one time? Do we truly believe it is God's will to make certain that those who do not believe in Christ never step foot on the road to Due West? That was not the lesson Jesus taught us, "I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." (Matt 15:7) Have we really gotten to the point in the world where evangelism and spreading the word is not needed? Should we never expect that our faith will not be tested? Look at the tests God placed on His people! Look at Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jonah, Daniel, David, and the most tested person of all time: look at Job! Do we expect that our walk with the Lord will never be questioned? Do we expect that if questioned the Lord does not have the answers waiting for us? The answers all there, in the inerrant book of "true truth"! Open it, read it, pray over its words.

Remember that Jesus commanded us to preach to all the nations. We cannot evangelize when we hole ourselves up together as Christians. God chose me before I was born. I don't know why, and I certainly cannot fathom His reasoning, but I do know this: He used Erskine College. He used her professors, her students, her alumni, and her friends. He can still use her in the same way. We can't let that mission be lost for fear of having faith tested.

I appreciate Erskine for what she has done for me. Again, I say it is with a heavy heart that I join in with the Alumni Association, but with prayer and faith in God's will, the sadness I felt with the events have been lifted and I can feel His hand using me.

In His Service Always,

Catherine Amanda Lawson Dale, Class of 1996