College faculty members are often called upon to work in three environments at the same time: <teaching>, <research>, and <public service>. This is especially true for faculty who work at four-year research universities. These three environments often intersect with one another and are catalysts for actions. They help explain who I am as a professional educator. However, they leave out the personal dimension that fuels my interests expressed in those three areas. That is the reason I added the fourth statement.

My faith in Jesus Christ is a powerful influence on my personal and professional life. In this faith statement, I share how my faith influenced my professional life in general and in particular the areas of teaching, research, and service. This statement has been long overdue for posting to my website.

Becoming a teacher was more than a job. It was a calling. As a youth, I was influenced by a verse in the Bible in high school. In the book of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul talked about various spiritual gifts God gives us as believers in Christ. When I read “teaching” as one of the gifts, I thought that applied to me. Paul explained that the gifts were “to equip the saints for the work…” While the context of the Bible verses is focused on the church, I perceived it more broadly.

This initial impression eventually led to my mission to teach history courses to college students so that they could make an even more effective difference in their world. I thought that a good grounding in history and understanding the forces of history that propelled change was necessary for helping to make sense of life and be an active agent in the world. This does not diminish calls experienced by others for different vocations. I am simply sharing mine. At the end of this statement, I will share more specifically how my faith has shaped my professional career and influenced each of the other three statements of <research>, <public service>, and <teaching>. I will now share the beginning of my journey of faith.

My Story of Personal Faith
I was raised in a Christian family. My parents were great models of how Christ would want us to think and behave. It was clear that they were devout in their faith. We went to church because it was an essential part of our lives. Dad taught the older adult Sunday School class for decades. Mom was the quiet one who prayed for me and my brothers and sister.

While I went to church every week during high school and attended church youth group activities, I still felt a sense of emptiness. I think the philosopher Pascal said, “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man.” That described me in high school. I was active in athletics, clubs, drama, and Boy Scouts. I attended a weekly Bible study composed of fellow high school students. I attended church every week. While I thought I was a Christian, I still felt an emptiness inside of me. I saw something in the lives of my
friends who attended the Bible study. One evening I was planning on going to the wrestling team beer bash when I received a phone call asking if I wanted to go to a religious revival meeting. I immediately said yes. I know it sounds overly dramatic, but that is how it happened.

I don’t remember much about what the preacher said, but I did know that I wanted what was in the lives of my friends. That night for the first time, I acknowledged that I was a sinner, Jesus died on the cross for my sins, He was raised from the dead to demonstrate His victory over sin, and then He began to live inside of me after I made a personal decision to invite Him into my life. Indeed, my life was different afterward. I felt a sense of purpose and meaning in my life. I could feel His presence in my life. I later developed confidence in the historical evidence for Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. I identified a few web links to lectures by some leading authorities on this topic, <https://www.arendale.org/my-personal-journey-of-faith>. The links to them are on the left-hand side of the website screen.

It would be nice to say that everything was great afterward. The problem was that I still had a sinful nature and sometimes made bad and selfish decisions. While I continued my journey as a college teacher described at the beginning of this statement, other parts of my journey were not what I had planned. As a single, never married person, I look around me today at all the married people and wonder what if. I listen to friends talk about their children, grandchildren, and more and sometimes miss having those memories. Life is about choices, and I often placed my career ahead of my personal life. I would not be dealing with a host of complications due to diabetes if I had made healthier choices with eating and exercising many decades ago. I have had several short-term and longer-term romantic relationships. I am fortunate that I am on good terms with my ex-girlfriends. I learned a great deal through those relationships and cherish those memories.

I have always been a local church member wherever I moved in the U.S. I found ways to serve others through a variety of ministries. I currently host an online Bible study with single and married people of various ages. I serve as a Greeter at the church. I served as a discussion leader for first-grade boys in Sunday School for three years. They were adorable. It was like a group of “Calvins” from the Calvin and Hobbes cartoon strip. I have mentored a young man through a church-affiliated organization for over a decade. We learned a great deal from each other through our friendship. I found a way to create a family and have enjoyed the time with him and his grandmother. At the end of the movie “Mrs. Doubtfire”, Robin Williams’s character exclaims that all kinds of families exist. I discovered that truth for myself.

**Intersection of my Personal Faith with my Professional Life**

For too much of my life, my faith as a Christ-follower was a stealth identity compared to professional life as an educator. However, I found intersections of my faith with my roles as a <researcher and knowledge disseminator>, <public service provider>, and <teacher>. Being a professional can be a solitary life. Much responsibility is on the educator for their work performance. Life as an educator was more of a lifestyle than a
predictable job. The following Bible verse reminded me that I was responsible for my work, “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men” Colossians 3:23). Following is a description of those three parts of my life.

I was clear in my college classes and with my colleagues about being a Christ-follower rather than a Christian. An unfortunate growing trend is the word “Christian” having negative baggage affixed to it in the eyes of students and young adults. Too many think “Christians” are negative, overly judgmental about others, and a killjoy about life. Many think Christians automatically reject gay, bisexual, or transgender people. Some of my best colleagues and friends are gay. For purposes of this brief statement, I will not try to unpack those ideas other than to say I am a “Christ-follower”, literally someone who seeks to emulate the life of Jesus. Rather than focusing on others, I concern myself with my relationship with God. My issues are enough for me to deal with. The church that I attend welcomes everyone to worship and learn. I participate in the community outreach activities of our church to feed the hungry, house the homeless, and provide ministries for those in need. The first step toward long-lasting change in society is for people to have a changed heart and to become a Christ-follower. With change on the inside, they are more likely to behave differently towards others and work to achieve social justice for everyone. Inner freedom is the first step to a free society.

Intersection with <Teaching>
As described earlier, I have always felt that my future career would be as a teacher. Equipping others for service became my motto. I considered history an excellent preparation for life. My students were focused on the forces that propel history and change rather than attempting to have them memorize people, places, and times. I wanted my students to see the underlying forces that were causing change. If they focused on those forces, they could see the same forces in their lives after my class was over. Perhaps they could make wise choices as a result.

I taught a variety of social science courses during my teaching career. My favorite was teaching an introductory global history course. Students said they enjoyed the class since it gave them background information on cultures over the past hundred years. Students reported they enjoyed the class since it gave them background information on cultures that they would interact with throughout their work and personal lives. At the University of Minnesota, I was fortunate to have many recent immigrant students enroll in the class, and everyone had an opportunity to interact with one another. The students loved the conversations with those new immigrants and the perspectives that they shared.

Our classroom became an experimental laboratory to explore different learning pedagogies, learning technologies, and more. It was a natural progression to use the classroom experiences for research studies and dissemination of best practices to make it more inclusive and accessible for first-gen students, historically underrepresented students, and those with disabilities.
I am passionate about making the class more inclusive because I can identify with many of my students. I am a first-generation college student. I was fortunate that my preferred learning style matched well with the lecture-only presentation style of my undergraduate college experience. That style of classroom presentation would not be appropriate anymore. When I think about who Jesus hung out with, it was not the religious leaders of society. Instead, it was marginalized and poor in society. An explicit Bible admonition is provided in the Book of Zechariah 7:9-10, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.”

I followed that model by adapting my classroom approach and activities to meet the needs of the first-gen, historically underrepresented, and marginalized students who do not have the social capital that many other students have. This is reflected in the next section of my faith statement, the intersection with my research and knowledge dissemination.

**Intersection with <Research and Dissemination>**

I have always been curious about things. As a youth, I disassembled items and then tried to put them back together again. Sometimes, I had a few parts left over at the end of the process. Many faculty members with graduate degrees in history spend most of their research on narrowly focused topics in history. It is common for them to focus on sharing what they learn through traditional print journals and books. While I was fascinated by many topics in history (especially the ancient Roman Empire and World War Two), I had little interest in pursuing this traditional path for historians.

My background helped to define my research interests. I was the first in my family to attend college, making me a “first-generation college student”. While my parents warmly supported my desire to attend college, they could offer me little advice or provide a role model to emulate. My parents did cultivate me to be goal-oriented, determined, hard-working, and disciplined. I found my undergraduate college experience challenging. As a result, I developed friendships with fellow students who shared my desire to earn high grades by studying together. My preferred ways of learning matched up well with the traditional classroom learning environment in the 1970s composed of lectures (some professors read from a script), no interactive classroom activities, no discussion sessions, and assigned readings without study guides. If there was a college learning center, I was not aware of it.

My personal experience as a first-generation college student led me to learn more about the challenges that similar students faced in college. I wanted to know more about support systems that could help similar students. This passion was partially influenced by a verse in the Bible from the Book of Proverbs 31:8-9, “Open your mouth for the mute and for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.” While I had successfully navigated the college experience, I learned how half of the students who enroll in college never finish it. While
a college education is not necessary for success in life, it provides many advantages and opportunities.

Along with this desire to research first-gen, historically underrepresented, and other marginalized students, I also wanted to share what I had learned with others. In addition to publishing through journal articles and books, I chose many other venues. To attract more readers, I posted my publications to online document repositories like my university library, Academia.edu, Researchgate.net, ERIC, and my <personal website>. My website has an extensive collection of my publications, draft reports, and more. I also disseminate my scholarship through <social media channels> such as podcasting, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

However, all this dissemination can be an isolated activity for me. The personal connection between my students and me was essential for much of my work. But, I needed a personal connection and collaboration with fellow educators and the general public with whom I wanted to share what I had learned. This desire provides a bridge to the final section of my faith statement, my passion for public service.

**Intersection with <Public Service and Engagement>**

Some higher education educators live a relatively solitary life of teaching their classes, conducting research, publishing through journals and books, and attending the occasional professional conference to present a paper on their research and listen to their colleagues. That lifestyle was not satisfactory for me. I pursued a community-engaged scholarship. Public service and engagement were essential. I needed to connect with other educators and the general public to engage in dialogue and collaborate on research. Working as research partners with colleagues and people in the community was essential. The Bible provided explicit admonitions to engage with the community and seek social justice for them. Two examples from the Old Testament include the Book of Isaiah 1:17, “Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless and plead the widow’s cause” and the Book of Jeremiah 22:3, “Thus says the LORD: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed.” In the New Testament from the Book of James 2:26, “For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.” Being a Christ-follower was accompanied by the expectation to engage in social action actively.

My role has been to take the lessons discovered by my research teams and by others in the community and then translate them so that others can act and improve the condition of others. I don’t invent best practices in education. But, I have a good knack for conducting research and learning from others and then effectively sharing that information with others through various venues.

For nearly a quarter-century, I have worked with like-minded educators who have identified best practices in teaching developmental-level courses, tutoring programs, and student-led peer study groups. I am responsible for heading up a team of fifty that produced a guide to best practices for study group programs, <website>. A significant
expansion of that guide is antiracism policies and practices. This area has been overlooked previously. I have been a frequent conference presenter. This has also allowed me to converse with colleagues and learn from them.

Throughout my career, I have followed the work of TRIO and other equity organizations focused on historically-underrepresented and marginalized students in secondary and postsecondary education. For over a decade, I have led a team from the Educational Opportunity Association (EOA) to identify best practices for serving these students and created a [website](#) to disseminate those practices. EOA represented TRIO and GEAR UP federally-funded programs in the Midwest.

While I have focused on first-gen students for decades, I neglected to more deeply consider the plight of people of color and how their lives have been negatively impacted by racism, discrimination, and poverty. In the past couple of years, I have reexamined my life and the privileges that came quickly to me as a white male. I am on a growth curve to more deeply understand how issues of race and poverty intersect with student learning and the academic support systems that were designed to help them achieve higher grades and graduate at higher rates. To help me understand these issues, I joined a nationwide research and writing group named Colleagues of Color for Social Justice. I am a fellow learner and author. Our first two publications are *Antiracism Policies and Practices for Student Study Groups* and *Antiracism Glossary for Education and Life*. These are available through our [CCSJ website](#).

Jesus spent much of his time with the oppressed and the marginalized people in society. I think that Predominately White Christian Churches have often ignored the day-to-day experiences of people of color in America. There is much to be ashamed of and much to take action with. I found new energy working with my colleagues of color to help solve the serious issues that make it difficult for students to achieve their dreams. I used to be afraid to engage in race and social justice matters. Especially with people of color. I have discovered that they have warmly embraced me in conversation to help me learn and take action with them as we jointly tackle the problems. I feel like for the first time, I am working out my Christ-follower faith within the context of this diverse and hurting world.

**Summing It All Up**

This personal faith statement is a working draft that will no doubt change as I continue to consider the intersections of my multiple identities. As someone else has said before, I am a work-in-progress. Thanks for reading. If you would like to talk, I would love that. The only people who call me on the phone are people trying to sell me Medicare Advantage insurance or extended warranties for my car (which I don’t own anymore). Please email me at arendale@umn.edu or call me on my cell phone, 612-812-0032.

God bless, David