Center for Whole Person Education

Exploring Christian Practices Initiative Application

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AdventHealth University
Orlando, FL

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 2
Organizational Information 3
Identity and Mission 3
Institutional Profile 3
Prior Work and Proven Capacity 4
Program Purpose 5
The Problem and the Opportunity 5
The Whole Person Education Framework 5
Our Theological Foundation 5
Our Christian Practices: CREATION Life 6
Purpose of the Center 6
Program Design 7
The Three Center Objectives 7
The Five Settings 7
Collaborations and Partnerships 8
Outcomes, Performance Indicators, and Evaluation Plan 9
Outcomes by Objectives 9
Performance Indicators 10
Evaluation Methods 10
Communication 10
Sustainability and Continuation 11
Organizational Capacity 12
Appendices 13
Figure 1: Whole Person Education Tree 13
Figure 2: Concentric Reach of Center 14
Figure 3: Grounded Christian Practices 15
References 16
Project Leaders 17

Executive Summary

AdventHealth University (AHU) seeks support through the Lilly Endowment's Exploring Christian Practices Initiative to establish the Center for Whole Person Education, a transformative initiative designed to address the growing crisis of fragmentation, burnout, anxiety, and loss of meaning among students, healthcare professionals, pastors, and communities. Rooted in the Christian mission of AdventHealth University and the Seventh-day Adventist tradition, the Center will integrate Christian spiritual practices with healthcare education, community engagement, and whole-person formation.

The proposed Center builds upon AHU's established Whole Person Education (WPE) framework, which promotes human flourishing through four foundational dimensions: belonging, wellbeing, fulfillment, and purpose. These dimensions are grounded in four theological concepts central to the Adventist tradition: Sanctuary, Sabbath, Creation, and Advent. Together, these concepts provide a framework for Christian practices that foster healing, resilience, vocation, compassion, and spiritual formation.

The Center responds to a national mental health crisis affecting young adults, healthcare professionals, and faith communities. Increasing levels of anxiety, depression, burnout, social isolation, and moral injury reveal the urgent need for educational and spiritual models that nurture the whole person. AHU is uniquely positioned to address this challenge through its partnership with AdventHealth, one of the largest faith-based healthcare systems in the United States, and through its long-standing commitment to integrating faith, spirituality, and healthcare education.

The Center will serve as a hub for formation, research, resource development, and dissemination across five interconnected settings:

1. Academic and co-curricular programs at AdventHealth University
2. Chaplaincy and spiritual care initiatives within AdventHealth
3. Pastors and ministry leaders across the Florida and Southeastern Conferences of Seventh-day Adventists
4. Special needs populations through occupational therapy and community partnerships
5. Community gardening and creation care initiatives developed in partnership with ADRA International

Through these settings, the Center will help students, faculty, healthcare professionals, pastors, and community members engage Christian practices such as Sabbath rest, spiritual retreats, contemplative prayer, mentoring, communal worship, vocational discernment, creation care, hospitality, testimony, and acts of compassionate service.

The Center's work is organized around three primary objectives:

1. Embed Christian practices rooted in Sabbath, Sanctuary, Creation, and Advent across education, healthcare, church, and community settings.
2. Evaluate how engagement in Christian practices strengthens belonging, wellbeing, fulfillment, and purpose.
3. Develop and disseminate Christian practice resources for healthcare, church, education, and community settings.

AHU brings strong institutional capacity to this initiative. Recent NetVUE grants supported the development and implementation of the WPE framework and strengthened faculty engagement, institutional strategy, and mission integration across the university. The proposed Center extends and scales this work while positioning AHU as a leader in Whole Person Education and Christian practices in healthcare and higher education.

Organizational Information

Identity and Mission

AdventHealth University (AHU) is a private, faith-based institution that focuses on preparing students for careers in healthcare. AHU was founded as Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences in 1992 to support the educational needs of AdventHealth, one of the largest faith-based healthcare systems in the United States. AHU is affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a Protestant denomination that was birthed in the United States of America in the mid-nineteenth century. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has promoted education and healthy living from its early days and currently operates the largest Protestant academic and hospital system globally. It operates over 10,000 schools, from the primary to tertiary level, with an approximate enrollment of 2.4 million students. About 1,000 of these schools are in the United States of America, 12 of which are universities. The church also operates at least 1,100 healthcare institutions around the world, with more than 100 hospitals operating in the United States.

AHU's mission is to develop skilled professionals who live the healing values of Christ. Although AHU students come from all religious backgrounds, and some identify as non-religious, the hope is that all who matriculate will choose to practice healthcare as ministry, which resonates with AdventHealth's commitment to Whole Person Care. AHU contributes to the goal by its careful attention to creating an intentional environment for Whole Person Education (WPE). WPE is based on the four pillars of belonging, wellbeing, fulfillment, and purpose, and involves all constituents, whether student, faculty, or staff. The WPE approach targets wholistic development in the intellectual, physiological, spiritual, and social domains. When executed with integrity and consistency, our graduates will understand that WPE is not merely academic but can have a lasting impact on self, family, and society.

Institutional Profile

The university's mission is aligned with AdventHealth's vision of "extending the healing ministry of Christ." The fact that it is embedded in one of the nation's largest faith-based systems provides it with unparalleled advantages. Students have opportunities to gain real world clinical experience in any number of healthcare settings that are near their center of learning. The partnership with AdventHealth is of great benefit to the campus itself, as demonstrated by the construction of a state-of-the-art simulation center where students can learn in a multidisciplinary integrative environment.

Although the main campus is in Orlando, AHU has satellites in Denver, Colorado and Tampa, Florida. All campuses operate in the vicinity of AdventHealth hospitals, which enhances the value of the students' education. Along with the physical sites, there are also programs that are offered online. Students are enrolled in programs on all levels and several health-related disciplines, ranging from Associate to Professional Doctoral degrees. In addition to degrees relating to physical health, there are also undergraduate and graduate degrees in Healthcare Administration, and two degrees in Spiritual Care and Chaplaincy. With a commitment to providing career pathways for all, including underserved populations, the university also offers several certificate programs that equip participants with requisite skills to enter the workforce and receive promotions.

AHU is regionally accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The Adventist Accrediting Association also denominationally accredits AHU. Individual programs are accredited by Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Education Programs (COA), Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE), Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE), Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology (JRCERT), Joint Review Committee on Educational Programs in Nuclear Medicine Technology (JRCNMT), Commission on Education of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP),

Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA), Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education (CAHME). Currently, there are approximately 1900 students in all programs.

AHU is fiscally sound. A 501(c)(3) corporation, the university maintains an annual budget of approximately $50 million, carefully managed through audited financial practices and a mature compliance infrastructure supported by AdventHealth. Revenue is derived primarily from tuition, supplemented by generous annual financial support from AdventHealth and a modest endowment of about $10 million.

Prior Work and Proven Capacity

AdventHealth University's commitment to Whole Person Education (WPE) has been both deepened and clarified through strategic collaboration with NetVUE. The NetVUE Professional Development Grant provided by the Lilly Endowment ($11,643) received by AHU in 2023 sparked a significant transformation on campus. Forty-two faculty and staff members participated in a process of reimagining how vocation, purpose, and Whole Person Education could become more deeply embedded across the university. Through this work, AHU recognized that vocational exploration, spiritual formation, and Whole Person Education are deeply interconnected. This led to the development of the Whole Person Education framework.

Another NetVUE grant ($54,050) awarded in 2025 has successfully expanded vocational exploration into academic, faculty development, and strategic planning initiatives. Whole Person Education is now becoming integrated into all courses required for all undergraduate students, where students will explore questions of belonging, wellbeing, fulfillment, purpose, vocation, and spiritual identity. These two grants have also strengthened faculty engagement, institutional strategy, leadership support, and collaboration across campus. The Board of Trustees, university leadership, faculty, and staff have embraced Whole Person Education as one of the university's defining commitments, demonstrating AHU's capacity to implement and sustain transformational initiatives.

In addition to these initiatives, AHU will host a regional NetVUE (CIC) gathering focused on *"Vocation and Whole Person Education in a Transactional Age"* in December 2026. This gathering will bring together faculty, administrators, chaplains, church leaders, and higher education partners to the AHU campus from several organizations to explore how Whole Person Education can address the growing challenges of fragmentation, burnout, transactional relationships, and loss of meaning in contemporary education and healthcare. The conference will demonstrate AHU's commitment to becoming a recognized center for Whole Person Education in which Christian practices serve both as the foundation of the framework and as the lived expression of whole-person flourishing.

The collaboration with NetVUE has been instrumental in AHU's mission to embed holistic spirituality across the curriculum. Since the university's inception, we have integrated theological courses that promote a Christian worldview, requiring every student to complete at least two religion classes. This commitment reached a natural milestone in 2021 with the launch of the Master of Science in Spiritual Care for aspiring chaplains. By 2026, the program will celebrate its fourth graduation, bringing our total alumni to 21. To support this growth, the seven full-time religion faculty were officially organized as the Department of Religion and Spiritual Care in 2025. This team brings deep expertise to the classroom: six hold doctorates (five PhDs and one DMin), three possess Clinical Pastoral Education credentials, and all are seasoned in Christian practices and spiritual formation.

This proposal aims to expand AHU's prior work in Whole Person Education, vocation, mission integration, spiritual care, and healthcare formation. The proposed Center will extend these efforts by creating a stronger bridge between the WPE framework and Christian practices. It advances the goals of the Exploring Christian Practices Initiative by creating opportunities for individuals to

explore and engage in Christian practices that help them find belonging, deepen faith, build community, and discover purpose.

The decision to apply for the Lilly Endowment Exploring Christian Practices Initiative emerged through collaborative discernment among AHU's executive leadership, mission leadership, faculty leaders engaged in Whole Person Education, the Department of Religion and Spiritual Care, and the Research and Grants Office. The proposed Center has the support of university leadership and reflects AHU's broader institutional commitment to advancing Whole Person Education as a defining expression of its mission, Christian identity, and long-term strategic direction.

Program Purpose

The Problem and the Opportunity

The CDC has declared mental health a national epidemic (CDC, 2025). Most recently, the Innerwell Team (2026) summarized the collective state of mental health in this nation. Research indicates that a staggering 61.5 million people, representing 23.4% of the adult population in the United States, experienced a mental health issue in 2024. This includes 21.4 million who faced a major depressive episode. Among young people 18-25, 15.9% had major depressive episodes, representing twice the adult rate. Anxiety disorders impact 19.1% of adults, and 14.5% of all youth ages 18-25 had symptoms that were moderate to severe.

While these rates are alarming, research suggests that individuals engaged in spiritual disciplines are better prepared to deal with issues of mental health, and other aspects of health in general. For instance, a recent longitudinal study from the Harvard School of Public Health shows how spirituality served as a protective factor against several health challenges (Brownstein, 2026). The apparent benefits of spiritual engagement to wholistic wellbeing could be linked to the reported upsurge in church attendance among young adults (Barna, 2025). AHU is uniquely poised to promote the benefits of Christian practices beyond the four walls of church buildings. Its faith-based identity, and its commitment to embedding WPE into every facet of its operations, positions it with a unique opportunity to address the current national crisis (CDC, 2025) through the development of the Center for Whole Person Education.

The Whole Person Education Framework

The WPE framework is AdventHealth University's approach to student formation and human flourishing. Mirroring AdventHealth's Whole Person Care model, WPE promotes an environment characterized by belonging, wellbeing, fulfillment, and purpose. These four can be seen as the roots of a flourishing tree where students grow not only intellectually and professionally, but also physically, psychologically, spiritually, and socially. The framework is visually represented through the WPE Tree (see figure 1), where the fruit is manifest in competencies such as resilience, leadership, compassion, communication, self-care, ethical reasoning, professional expertise, spiritual awareness, and discernment of purpose.

Our Theological Foundation

The WPE framework of belonging, wellbeing, fulfillment, and purpose, is grounded in four core theological concepts drawn from the Seventh-day Adventist tradition:

- **Sanctuary.** The understanding of Sanctuary supports ***belonging*** by emphasizing hospitality, community, healing, reconciliation, and the creation of safe spaces where individuals feel known and valued.
- **Sabbath.** The Sabbath institution supports ***wellbeing*** by teaching rhythms of rest, worship, balance, gratitude, restoration, and resilience amid stress and burnout.
- **Creation.** Belief in Creation supports ***fulfillment*** by affirming that each person is uniquely created with gifts, purpose, and the responsibility to care for others and the

world. It also emphasizes stewardship, beauty, embodiment, nutrition, and care for creation.

- **Advent.** The Advent concept supports ***purpose*** by emphasizing hope, calling, discernment, mission, service, justice, and commitment to the healing and restoration of the world.

Together, these four theological concepts provide the spiritual foundation for the WPE framework and shape the Christian practices that AHU seeks to cultivate across education, healthcare, community life, and spiritual formation.

Our Christian Practices: CREATION Life

Augustine of Hippo famously argued that the human character is shaped by "rightly ordered loves." In *Confessions* (397/2008) and *The City of God* (426/1958), he explained that spiritual formation is the process of learning to love God above all else, which in turn allows us to order all other earthly loves appropriately. This concept of *ordo amoris* (the "order of loves") remains foundational to how we understand spiritual formation, vocation, and human flourishing today. Augustine's theological framework provides a powerful bridge to Whole Person Education. Just as Christian spiritual practices deepen faith and build resilience, both models seek to form individuals who are rooted in healthy, balanced relationships with God, self, others, and creation. By aligning our internal "loves" with our external actions, we help our constituents discern what matters most by empowering them to live lives defined by vocation, community, and purposeful service.

The path from the WPE framework to Christian practice is grounded in the four Seventh-day Adventist theological concepts, and is also informed by CREATION Life, AdventHealth's whole person care health plan. The AdventHealth website (n.d.) defines the CREATION acronym as the following spiritual principles:

1. **Choice.** Take charge of your destiny. The first step toward wholeness is realizing you are in control of your life. Grab the pen and start writing your life story.
2. **Rest**. Sometimes making time means letting go. Making time for rest and relaxation revives the body, reduces stress, and restores the spirit.
3. **Environment**. It is not just what is inside you, but also what is around you. All our senses (sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste) can influence our mood as well as our health.
4. **Activity.** Activity includes both physical and mental development. The mind and the body are intimately connected.
5. **Trust in God**. Our faith, beliefs, and hope affect our health. Keep the faith and know that God is cheering you on in every endeavor, every day.
6. **Interpersonal Relations.** Love and be loved. Surrounding yourself with friends and family strengthens your will, improves your health, and lifts your mood.
7. **Outlook**. Your outlook impacts your outcomes. When you realize every day is a gift, you can give your all every day.
8. **Nutrition.** Goodness in, goodness out. Making small changes to your diet can have a big impact on your well-being.

When filtered through the four Seventh-day Adventist theological concepts and the eight spiritual principles of Creation Life, Whole Person Education provides an opportunity to advance several Christian practices as illustrated in figure 3.

Purpose of the Center

Headquartered at AHU's main campus, the Center will serve several interconnected groups who share a commitment to advancing the benefit of specific Christian practices to the wholistic care of the body, mind, and spirit. A concentric strategy will guide the program's operational impact (see figure 2). The integration of WPE into the overall AHU experience will be the primary focus, with

the intentional inclusion of students, faculty, and staff. These constituents form the core of the WPE experience and will be the primary ambassadors for the benefits of Christian practice in navigating challenges in life. From the core, the Center extends its services to other organizational entities. As an essential part of the AdventHealth family, the Center will contribute to addressing the psycho-social concerns of healthcare professionals, including those who provide spiritual care. The Center's reach will also extend to clergy and lay leaders by equipping them to apply WPE principles in ministry to their parishes and communities. The center will become a leader in the WPE concept and extend its reach to constituents of other educational, healthcare, and ecclesial institutions. Through AHU's WPE integration work, NetVUE-supported faculty and staff conversations, mission integration efforts, chaplaincy education, and engagement with students and healthcare partners, AHU has consistently heard concerns related to belonging, burnout, vocational uncertainty, spiritual identity, resilience, and the need for practices that connect faith with daily life and professional purpose.

Program Design

The Center for Whole Person Education (Center) at AdventHealth University will create a sustainable model for integrating Christian practices rooted in the theological concepts of Sanctuary, Sabbath, Creation, and Advent. Programming will intentionally embed Whole Person Education (WPE) across curricular, co-curricular, and experiential learning, supporting student formation while equipping faculty and staff for meaningful implementation. Action research will evaluate these efforts and generate evidence to inform continuous improvement, innovation, and scholarship in whole-person care. Resource development and dissemination will ensure that effective tools, models, and practices are created, shared, and consistently applied across academic, clinical, and community settings.

Program leadership will include Oleg Kostyuk, PhD, who will provide mission integration and Center leadership; Angela Sampson, MHA, OTR/L, who will guide special needs and occupational therapy partnerships; Keith Burton, PhD, who will support theological and spiritual care formation; and Neal Smith, JD, who will support scholarship, resources, and dissemination.

The Three Center Objectives

By fostering belonging, wellbeing, fulfillment, and purpose, the Center will support students, faculty, healthcare professionals, clergy, and community members through three primary objectives:

1. Embed Christian practices rooted in Sabbath, Sanctuary, Creation, and Advent across education, healthcare, church, and community settings.
2. Evaluate how engagement in Christian practices strengthen belonging, wellbeing, fulfillment, and purpose.
3. Develop and disseminate Christian practice toolkits, retreat models, reflection guides, mentoring resources, and replication guides for healthcare, church, education, and community settings.

The Five Settings

Programming initiatives will implement Christian practices directly connected to healthcare education and whole-person care across several different settings. Each setting is designed in collaboration with strategic partnerships to help participants better understand the value of meaningful, purposeful, and whole-person-oriented healthcare education.

1. **Academic and Co-Curricular Programs at AHU**. The Center will enhance the existing curricular and co-curricular initiatives, emphasizing the centrality of Christian practices in the mission of WPE. Proposed activities may include faculty development, student retreats, mentoring groups, course integration, and reflection guides.

2. **Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care within AdventHealth**. The Center will partner with the chaplaincy and spiritual care departments within the AdventHealth hospital system to incorporate Christian practices in strategies to equip healthcare professionals struggling with burnout, grief, compassion fatigue, and moral injury. Proposed activities may include chaplaincy formation intensives, burnout/moral injury workshops, spiritual care resources.
3. **Pastors and Ministry Leaders**. The Center will partner with church leaders to develop Whole Person Care programs that integrate Christian spiritual practices into congregational life and community ministry. This partnership will create an opportunity to reimagine pastoral vocation as a ministry of community healing, where pastors serve not only as spiritual leaders, but also as conduits to wellbeing, belonging, and hope. Proposed activities may include pastoral retreats, cohorts, and community healing conferences.
4. **Special Needs Populations**. The Center will incorporate Christian practices in the care of special needs populations served through AdventHealth University's occupational therapy programs. Proposed activities may include inclusive worship/formation resources, family engagement events, and Occupational Therapy-supported community programming.
5. **Community Garden and Farm**. The Center will launch a community garden and farm that provide opportunities for active participation in innovative Christian practices. Proposed activities may include creation care workshops, nutrition education, service-learning, and Sabbath/Creation reflection practices.

Together, each of these settings will demonstrate that a WPE model based on Christian practices is not simply an educational philosophy, but a revolutionary approach to healthcare education. By helping students, faculty, healthcare chaplains, pastors, and healthcare professionals see the relationship between Christian practices and whole-person care, the Center will create a model that reshapes how healthcare education is understood and delivered.

Collaborations and Partnerships

Because the Center for Whole Person Education and Christian Practices is designed to integrate formation, research, healthcare, church life, and community engagement, its success depends on strong partnerships across multiple sectors. The Center will build on AHU's existing relationships while also creating new collaborative opportunities that extend the reach and impact of Whole Person Education and Christian practices.

Institutional/Strategic Relationships and/or Dissemination Networks

1. **AdventHealth.** AdventHealth's well developed spiritual care structure offers a tested conduit to expand the Center's work. They will assist in recruiting healthcare professionals and chaplains, co-designing resilience resources, providing spiritual care expertise, and hosting workshops.
2. **Florida and Southeastern Conferences of Seventh-day Adventists.** Pastors and lay leaders in these conferences afford a pathway for the Center to promote Christian practices to scores of congregations. They will assist in recruiting pastors and churches, hosting pastoral cohorts, and supporting dissemination to congregations.
3. **The Council of Independent Colleges/NetVUE.** CIC and NetVUE provide a network for sharing a Christian practice-informed WPE across member institutions. They will support dissemination, provide faculty development connections, and convene conference opportunities.
4. **SDA Colleges and Universities.** These partnerships will support a broader movement within Adventist higher education to integrate a WPE informed by Christian practices more

intentionally into students' academic life, spiritual development, wellbeing, and vocational exploration.

Confirmed Collaborating Partners:

1. **ADRA International.** Through its agricultural initiatives, ADRA will serve as an important partner in the Center's community gardening and creation care work. They will advise on the community garden/farm model; support creation care and promote stewardship resources.
2. **Consortium of Hospital-Affiliated Colleges and Universities.** These partnerships will support dissemination, faculty collaboration, shared research, and broader influence in healthcare-related higher education.

Outcomes, Performance Indicators, and Evaluation Plan

Outcomes by Objectives

The Center's work is organized around three objectives, each with anticipated outcomes that collectively advance Whole Person Education within AHU and across the broader field.

1. ***Embed*** **Christian practices rooted in Sabbath, Sanctuary, Creation, and Advent across education, healthcare, church, and community settings.** Students, faculty, healthcare professionals, clergy, and community members will demonstrate meaningful engagement in Christian practices drawn from the Adventist theological tradition. Across all five settings, participants will experience structured, intentional opportunities to practice Sabbath rest, spiritual community, creation care, and vocational discernment as formative disciplines. The CREATION Life framework will become a shared language for whole-person flourishing across AHU's academic programs, the AdventHealth system, partner churches, and community initiatives. Faculty and staff will model and mentor these practices within their professional roles, and the community garden will serve as a living laboratory where multiple Christian practices converge in embodied, communal form.
2. ***Evaluate*** **how engagement in Christian practices strengthens belonging, wellbeing, fulfillment, and purpose.** Action research conducted through the Center will generate evidence that engagement in Christian practices produces measurable growth in the four WPE roots across diverse populations and settings. Participants will report increased sense of belonging, improved wellbeing, greater clarity of vocational purpose, and deeper experience of fulfillment in their personal and professional lives. Findings will contribute to the broader scholarly conversation on whole-person care, spiritual formation, and the role of Christian practices in healthcare and higher education. Interdisciplinary collaboration among faculty, chaplains, healthcare professionals, and community partners will strengthen the quality and reach of the Center's research and enrich the evidence base for WPE as a replicable model.
3. ***Develop*** **and disseminate Christian practice toolkits, retreat models, reflection guides, mentoring resources, and replication guides for healthcare, church, education, and community settings.** The Center will produce a comprehensive suite of resources grounded in the CREATION Life framework and the four Adventist theological concepts, designed for practical use across diverse contexts. Partner institutions (including SDA colleges and universities, CIC, and NetVUE members, CHACU institutions, and faith-based healthcare organizations) will have access to resources that enable them to adopt and adapt WPE principles within their own communities. A publicly accessible repository will serve as the primary dissemination platform, supplemented by convenings, webinars, and collaborative events that extend the Center's reach and deepen its national influence. The measure of success will not only be the resources produced but the communities transformed by engaging in Christian practices that foster whole-person flourishing.

Performance Indicators

Progress toward these outcomes will be tracked through indicators aligned to each objective. For Objective 1, key indicators include the number of programs and settings integrating CREATION Life disciplines, annual participant engagement rates with targets of 300 by Year 1, 750 in Year 2, 1000 in Year 3, and 1,500 by Year 5, faculty and staff participation in formation experiences, and community garden engagement metrics. For Objective 2, the Center will track the number of action research projects initiated, pre- and post-assessment data demonstrating participant growth across the four WPE roots, and the number of peer-reviewed publications, presentations, and interdisciplinary scholarly collaborations produced. For Objective 3, indicators include the number and type of resources developed across healthcare, church, education, and community settings, adoption rates among partner institutions, the number of convenings and dissemination events hosted annually, and partner feedback on the accessibility and effectiveness of Center resources.

Evaluation Methods

The Center will employ a mixed-methods evaluation approach combining quantitative tracking with qualitative inquiry to capture both the breadth and depth of impact. Quantitative data will be drawn from formation assessments, participant engagement records, program documentation, repository analytics, and partnership agreements. Qualitative insight will be gathered through faculty and partner surveys, student reflective journals, interviews, review of research focus, partner feedback, and community impact reports. Reviews will follow an annual cycle with mid-year progress checks, supported by ongoing repository analytics and periodic end-of-term feedback from community and clinical partners. Center leadership will coordinate evaluation in collaboration with program directors, fieldwork coordinators, and institutional research support. Findings will be used to refine Christian practice programming, strengthen partnerships, and ensure the Center's work remains responsive to its constituents and aligned with AHU's mission. The Research & Assessment Coordinator will serve as the primary evaluation lead, working with the Center Director, institutional research support, faculty investigators, and partner representatives.

Communication

Effective communication will be essential to the Center's success, visibility, and long-term impact. Operating at the intersection of healthcare, higher education, church life, and community engagement, the Center will pursue three communication goals: internal alignment and engagement, external visibility and dissemination, and storytelling that demonstrates impact and transformation.

Internally, the Center will cultivate a shared understanding of WPE and Christian practices across AHU through newsletters, faculty development sessions, mission integration gatherings, and campus events. Structured communication pathways with key partners, including the AdventHealth Mission Office, Florida, and Southeastern Conference leadership, CHACU institutions, and ADRA International, will support collaborative planning and ongoing evaluation.

Externally, the Center will position AHU as a leading voice in WPE and Christian practices through conference presentations, peer-reviewed publications, webinars, and collaborative events with CIC/NetVUE, CHACU, and other partners. A dedicated web presence will feature program descriptions, resources, research findings, and engagement opportunities, supported by strategic use of social media to connect with healthcare professionals, young adults, and faith communities.

Equally central to the strategy will be storytelling. The Center will capture and share stories of transformation from students, healthcare professionals, chaplains, pastors, and community participants through testimonies, short videos, written reflections, and case studies, illustrating how engagement in Christian practices contributes to belonging, wellbeing, fulfillment, and purpose. Research and assessment findings will be translated into accessible reports and publications,

ensuring that communication remains evidence-based and aligned with the Center's commitment to scholarship and continuous improvement.

Sustainability and Continuation

The Center for Whole Person Education is designed not as a temporary initiative, but as a sustainable and evolving extension of AdventHealth University's mission to "practice healthcare as ministry" through Whole Person Education. From its inception, the Center is intentionally embedded within the university's strategic priorities, academic structure, and institutional culture, ensuring that its work will continue well beyond the grant period.

A primary factor supporting sustainability is the deep alignment between the Center and AHU's established WPE framework. WPE is already being integrated across the curriculum, co-curricular programming, and institutional strategy. As a result, the Center does not introduce a new direction, but rather strengthens, organizes, and expands work that is already underway. Faculty development initiatives, mission integration efforts, and academic programs provide an existing foundation upon which the Center will continue to build. This integration ensures that the practices, resources, and outcomes developed through the Center will remain embedded in the daily life of the university.

Institutional commitment further strengthens the Center's long-term viability. AHU leadership, including the President, Board of Trustees, and senior administration, has demonstrated strong and ongoing support for Whole Person Education and mission integration. This commitment is reflected in strategic planning, resource allocation, and institutional priorities through 2030 and beyond. As the Center demonstrates measurable outcomes related to student formation, faculty engagement, and community impact, it is expected to become a permanent and defining feature of the university's identity.

Financial sustainability will be achieved through a diversified model that includes institutional support, external funding, and program-generated revenue. AHU's stable financial structure, supported by tuition revenue, AdventHealth partnership, and philanthropic giving, provides a strong foundation for continued investment in the Center. Over time, the Center will pursue additional grants, donor partnerships, and endowment opportunities aligned with its mission. Fundraising cultivation will begin in Year 1 through coordination with AHU leadership and AdventHealth Foundation partners, with Years 3–5 focused on donor cultivation, grant prospecting, endowment conversations, and program-generated revenue models. AHU will institutionally absorb fundraising expenses.

Partnerships will also play a critical role in sustaining and extending the Center's work. Collaborations with the AdventHealth Mission Office, Florida, and Southeastern Conferences, CHACU, ADRA International, and other institutions create shared ownership and mutual investment in outcomes. These partnerships will support co-developed programming, shared resources, and expanded reach, reducing reliance on a single funding source while increasing long-term impact. As partner institutions adopt and adapt elements of the Center's model, a broader network of implementation will emerge, further reinforcing sustainability through shared practice and collaboration.

The Center's commitment to action research and continuous evaluation will ensure that its work remains relevant, effective, and adaptable. By systematically assessing outcomes such as belonging, wellbeing, fulfillment, and purpose, the Center will refine its programming and demonstrate its value to stakeholders. Evidence of impact will support future funding opportunities, institutional investment, and broader dissemination.

Finally, sustainability will be supported through intentional leadership development and capacity building. Faculty, staff, chaplains, and pastors will be equipped not only as participants, but as facilitators and champions of WPE and Christian practices. This distributed leadership model

ensures that the work of the Center is not dependent on a single team but is carried forward by a growing network of trained leaders across multiple contexts.

Through strong institutional alignment, diversified funding, strategic partnerships, ongoing evaluation, and leadership development, the Center for Whole Person Education is well-positioned for long-term sustainability and continued growth. It will remain a dynamic and generative force within AdventHealth University and beyond, advancing a vision of healthcare education that forms individuals to live with purpose, serve with compassion, and contribute to the healing of communities.

Organizational Capacity

The proposed Center is not a new and independent initiative. It is an extension and natural continuation of AHU's commitment to Whole Person Education (WPE), healthcare as ministry, and spiritual care and Christian practices embedded in the university's structure, governance, and culture. The Center will be central to AHU's mission. AHU leadership is committed to WPE, and the university possesses the financial stability and experience needed to sustain the Center.

AdventHealth University operates with a current annual budget of approximately $50,000,000. Most revenue comes from tuition, augmented by AdventHealth support, philanthropic giving, and external grants. The university operates with mature financial systems, audited accounting practices, and compliance structures supported by AdventHealth. These systems have allowed AHU to manage multiple grants and take on an additional grant of this scale, ensuring fiscal accountability, transparent reporting, and effective allocation of resources.

AHU's enrollment has steadily increased over the past two years, contributing to financial stability. WPE has supported this growth by establishing the value of an AHU education, giving students purpose for future careers, improving outcomes, and increasing retention. By further integrating WPE through the Center, AHU will continue strengthening enrollment, formation, and sustainability.

AHU has a proven track record of integrating a Christian, whole-person approach into the curriculum. Since the university's founding, religion classes have been a core element of every program, and AHU has created courses unique to its educational approach, including Philosophy of Healthcare, World Religions for Healthcare Providers, Matthew 25, and Role Fidelity and the Exercise of Power. In 2018, AHU created a graduate degree in spiritual care to educate chaplains. The program launched in 2021 and has graduated more than 20 students as of Spring 2026.

With support from NetVUE grants, AHU developed the WPE framework and is integrating WPE into every course and support department. These efforts are supported by university leadership and are part of AHU's strategic plan through 2030, with intent to continue into successive plans.

Establishing a Center with multiple constituencies, including students, healthcare professionals, pastors, chaplains, faculty, and community partners, will require coordination, governance, commitment, and evaluation. Faculty and staff, particularly in Spiritual Care, bring expertise in Christian practice-informed WPE and experience leading multi-stakeholder initiatives. AHU's history of coordinating across healthcare systems, academic programs, church partners, and networks, including AdventHealth, NetVUE, CHACU, and denominational partners, has produced strategies for communication, accountability, and planning. The endorsement of both the President and Board of Trustees reflects institutional will and a strategic vision to sustain the Center.

AdventHealth University demonstrates the financial stability, leadership support, organizational maturity, and experience needed to undertake creation of the Center. The proposed Center builds upon existing strengths, successful initiatives, and institutional commitments and represents the fulfillment of AHU's mission and vision.

Appendices

Figure 1: Whole Person Education Tree.



Figure 2: Concentric Reach of Center

CONCENTRIC REACH OF CENTER FOR WHOLE PERSON EDUCATION

Academic

- AHU students across all programs and campuses including online who are seeking belonging, wellbeing, vocational clarity, and deeper integration of faith with healthcare and professional life
- Young adults who are spiritually curious, searching for meaning and community, and who may feel disconnected from traditional church life, reached through AHU programs and partnerships
- Faculty and staff pursuing deeper integration of faith, vocation, and Whole Person Education across the curriculum and campus culture
- Community members and volunteers participating in service-learning, gardening, nutrition, creation care, and intergenerational engagement through Center-sponsored initiatives

Healthcare

- Healthcare professionals, caregivers, and leaders experiencing burnout, compassion fatigue, moral injury, grief, and spiritual exhaustion
- Chaplaincy students, chaplains, spiritual care professionals, and healthcare mission leaders seeking practical tools for spiritual formation, resilience, and effective whole-person care
- Special needs populations served through partnerships with AHU's occupational therapy programs and faith communities (e.g., neurodivergent, autistic, and intellectually disabled individuals).

Church & Community

- Pastors and church leaders across the Florida and Southeastern Conferences of Seventh-day Adventists seeking restorative practices, retreat models, spiritual development resources, and stronger ways to serve their congregations and communities
- Lay leaders and ministry volunteers seeking to apply WPE and CREATION Life principles in congregational and community ministry settings

Replication Partners

- SDA colleges and universities, CIC, and NetVUE institutions, CHACU members, and other Christian higher education organizations interested in adapting Whole Person Education and CREATION Life practices for their own campuses and communities

Figure 3: Grounded Christian Practices

WPE ROOT	CONCEPT	CREATION LIFE	CHRISTIAN PRACTICES
Belonging	Sanctuary	Interpersonal Relationships, Environment	• Testimony • Spiritual mentoring • Spiritual companionship • Communal worship • Faith sharing
Wellbeing	Sabbath	Rest, Activity, Nutrition	• Sabbath rest • Spiritual retreats • Worship • Contemplative prayer
Fulfillment	Creation	Choice, Outlook, Environment	• Creation care as spiritual stewardship • Creation-based spiritual retreats • Creation care through community gardening • Missional service
Purpose	Advent	Trust in God, Outlook, Choice	• Discernment exercises • Pilgrimage • Missional service • Vocational discernment • Spiritual mentoring • Acts of compassionate service

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Project Leaders



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Keith Augustus Burton, PhD is the Director of Graduate Programs in the Department of Religion and Spiritual Care. He has authored several books and is a regular presenter at academic conferences and church events. He teaches in the areas of Biblical Hermeneutics and Theology and developed the Jesus and Contemporary Society class for the undergraduate program. His interfaith work has been recognized with awards from the Associated Church Press and the Huntsville Interfaith Mission Service.



Neal Smith Jr., JD is the Director of the R.A. Williams Library at AdventHealth University. He leads library collection development and serves as the scholarly communications librarian. He contributes to multiple university initiatives, including mission integration, and regularly provides support for evidence-based practices in education.