



Felix Loc
Chief Administrative Officer

VIA EMAIL

January 20, 2025

RE: Luther Classical College Application for RSO Status

Dear Members of the Board of Regents for Luther Classical College,

I am writing to you as the Chief Administrative Officer of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in response to the recent announcement titled “Luther Classical College Applies for RSO Status,” a copy of which is enclosed.

The announcement states that Luther Classical College (“LCC”) received an invitation to apply for Recognized Service Organization (“RSO”) status with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (“Synod”). After having conferred with representatives of Synod, I have confirmed that no such invitation was extended to LCC on behalf of Synod.

LCC is not eligible for RSO status.

The Synod Board of Directors historically and consistently has recognized that higher education institutions are not eligible for RSO status but instead fall within the governance of the Concordia University System (“CUS”). RSO status is administered by the Synod’s Offices of National and International Mission, subject to policies of the Board of Directors and Synod’s mission boards and offices. RSO status can apply to early, elementary, middle and high schools under the administration of the Offices of National and International Mission, but the Offices of National and International Mission do not and never have had responsibility over colleges and universities.

An application for RSO status, accordingly, would not be considered and would not be granted to LCC or any other college or university requesting such status.

LCC, as acknowledged in the LCC announcement, is not a college of the Synod and not a CUS institution. Bylaw 3.10.6.6, adopted by the Synod congregations at the 2023 Synod Convention, allows and provides a means for a college or university that is not part of CUS to request to join CUS. That is the option available to LCC if it is interested in pursuing the possibility of being a college of the Synod and a CUS institution. This information was repeatedly communicated to LCC before the enclosed announcement was made.



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Chief Administrative Officer

Synod's Constitution and Bylaws are the means by which we govern our life together. I invite you to familiarize yourself with the provisions that apply to colleges and universities. Given the public nature of LCC's announcement, I am making this letter public to ensure there are no misunderstandings about LCC's current status in relation to the Synod and to make known the path for LCC to pursue a relationship with the Synod.

Sincerely,

Felix Loc
LCMS Chief Administrative Officer

cc: Rev. Matthew Harrison, LCMS President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Board of Directors
Rev. John Sias, LCMS Secretary
Rev. Kevin Robson, LCMS Chief Mission Officer
Rev. Jamison Hardy, CUS President
CUS University Presidents

Enclosure



Dear friends in Christ,

Epiphany blessings to you and yours! Below is the announcement of LCC's application for RSO status.

Luther Classical College Applies for RSO Status

At its December 6, 2024 meeting in Denver, the Luther Classical College (LCC) Board of Regents voted to apply for Recognized Service Organization (RSO) status with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). “We are delighted at the opportunity and invitation to submit an application to become an RSO of LCMS. The support of hundreds of patrons and congregations who with countless words of encouragement and prayers, were invaluable contributors to this decision,” says LCC president Rev. Dr. Harold Ristau. “As LCC has arisen alongside our precious Concordias, President Harrison indicated at my inauguration a keen desire for a relationship between us and our Synod. Although RSO status has no bearing on institutional accreditation, nor the progress and continued success of our college, official recognition by LCMS symbolizes an appreciation of our mission, formalizing the blessing that we have already received from leaders and representatives of Synod who, with us, celebrate our contribution to Lutheran education in America

amid the refreshing revival of classical learning, and the mutual blessing of a partnership between LCMS and LCC.”

LCC is not a college of the LCMS as are the Concordia Universities, but its supporting congregations are members of Synod, as are its governing board, faculty, staff, and students. LCC adheres without compromise to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions in its [doctrine and practice](#).

“The founding of LCC is a high point in the Lutheran Classical Education movement. The recovery of the Western, Christian heritage of classical education began nationally in the 1990s, initiated in different forms within various Christian and non-Christian traditions,” Rev. John Hill, president of the Wyoming District—LCMS, explains. “Lutherans came late to the movement, marked in the late 1990s by the founding of a few classical schools and the first conferences of the nascent Consortium for Classical Lutheran Education (CCLE). The movement is now growing rapidly among LCMS parochial schools and homeschools.”

From its beginning, the classical Lutheran education movement in the LCMS sought to find and recruit classically trained pastors, teachers, and headmasters. For the past quarter-century Lutheran schools and parents have contemplated the need for a Lutheran classical college in which Christian doctrine, philosophy, history, literature, the classical languages, and the mathematical arts are thoroughly integrated and incorporated into the life of the home, church, and community. Previous organized efforts to start such a college over the past 25 years recognized that the time was not right.

The overwhelmingly successful founding of LCC, with extensive interest throughout Synod, burgeoning student enrollment for the 2025–26 school year, generous financial support, and the [appointment of a quality faculty](#), indicates the strength of the classical education movement in Synod. LCC extends the educational course of classical education into college and strengthens the efforts to distribute the blessings of a rich classical Lutheran education into Lutheran homes and congregations.

LCC is now seeking formal LCMS recognition by applying to become an RSO. The LCMS grants RSO status to a service organization that is “independent of Synod, fosters the mission and ministry of the church, engages in program activity that extends the mission and ministry of the Synod, is in harmony with the programs of the Synod, and respects and does not act contrary to the doctrine and practice of

the Synod” (LCMS Handbook). RSO status approval for LCC will be considered by Synod’s Office of National Mission according to policies established by the LCMS Board of Directors.

The Synod Handbook distinguishes between several kinds of organizations. LCC falls into the category of “educational service organization” (ESO), which “under Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions operates a Christian school.” An ESO is evaluated by the district in which it is located and receives appropriate ecclesiastical supervision from that district president. LCC will receive its evaluation from the Wyoming District and its district president.

By granting RSO status to LCC, the LCMS would officially recognize the first congregationally founded college in decades. This recognition will confirm LCC’s churchly relationship to the congregations of Synod and the ecclesiastical supervision of its doctrine and practice. It also opens options for LCC to engage in services through various agencies of Synod, such as Concordia Plans Services, Lutheran Church Extension Fund, and Lutheran Foundation.

The [LCC Mission Statement](#) reads, “Luther Classical College educates Lutherans in the classical, Lutheran tradition and prepares them for godly vocations within family, church, and society, fostering Christian culture through study of the best of our Western heritage.”

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