



Quotes

President Kusch:

Q: Can you provide some background regarding the name change?

A: Ensign College has now had six names since its inception in 1886, and had been called LDS Business College from 1931-2020. Previously, the name had been LDS College, but in the early years of the Great Depression, when the Church was no longer able to support the College, the only department that remained was the Business Department. Thus, the addition of “Business” to the name.

Additionally, with the other changes that have been approved and announced, the Board of Trustees felt this was the appropriate time to change the name of the College.

Q: Why the name Ensign College?

A: On July 26, 1847, two days after arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, Brigham Young and several other men hiked to the top of a mountain he had seen in vision prior to beginning the trek west. From their vantage point, one thousand feet above the valley floor, Brigham Young described his vision and the men “began to lay plans for the future city.”¹ That spot, Ensign Peak, rises just north of where the College is located. It was given that name because it was a symbol of the "spirit of international outreach and the ancient promise that here one could learn the ways of God."² Throughout its one hundred and thirty-four year history, Ensign College, now located in the shadow of Ensign Peak, has provided such an environment.

Q: Was the name BYU considered as part of a name change to be consistent with the other CES institutions of higher learning?

A: No. We wanted the College to have a name distinct from the other CES universities and BYU-Pathway Worldwide.

Q: What is the effective date of the name change?

A: It is September 1, 2020, to coincide with the beginning of the new academic year.

Q: Ensign College has been granted approval by the Board of Trustees to offer three applied bachelor of science (BAS) degrees when its name changes to Ensign College. What are they?

A: Business Management, Communications, and Information Technology.

Q: What prompted the decision to seek approval to offer these degrees?

A: Approximately 80% of our students are in programs where transferring to another school is a necessity. Many of our students would prefer to stay and finish a degree with us. It will be more affordable for them and because of personal circumstances, many are not in a position to move to attend another school.

Q: Why these three degrees?

A: Demand. We wanted to create a model that would allow the institution to serve the maximum number of students, without needing to create a large number of degrees. The structure and framework of the degrees allows the majority of our existing certificates to stack into these applied degrees. We also believe that nearly all future curriculum offerings will stack into these degrees.

Q: What about students who wish to transfer to Ensign College to finish a bachelor's degree? Will you welcome them and accept transfer credit?

A: Absolutely! We will welcome transfer students and will evaluate all credits earned at other institutions.

Q: With the introduction of these degrees, will Ensign College be offering any new programs?

A: Yes. We are in the process now of creating a Certified Management Accountant curriculum that we are particularly excited about. We will also be offering a new digital content creation certificate. Others will come.

Q: Why bachelor of applied science degrees, and how do they differ from a bachelor of science degree?

A: The primary difference is the applied nature of the curriculum. Our programs will be very focused on job readiness, just like our two-year programs. We work closely with employers to make sure our graduates get real-world experience through projects and internships. Our instructional model immerses students in real-world environments from the very beginning of their time with us.

Q: Will students who earn a BAS degree be able to attend graduate school if that is their choice?

A: Absolutely. We do not believe a BAS degree will be a deterrent in any way. We have spoken to a number of universities and they have indicated they would be happy to have our graduates. Every graduate program will define their own prerequisites and those are things we cannot control. Our goal is to create programs that are of the highest quality. And, while getting students ready for graduate school will not be our primary focus, we think those who want advanced degrees will be able to do so.

Q: Will this affect Ensign College’s accreditation status as a two-year institution?

A: No. We will preserve our two-year status. Our accrediting agency, the Northwest Commission for Colleges and Universities is very familiar with efforts such as this. For example, over 30 community colleges in the state of Washington offer similar degrees, and community colleges in many states are awarding bachelor’s degrees.

Q: How will this affect the three BYU schools that also offer bachelor’s degrees?

A: We believe this will complement the offerings by the other schools. One of the purposes of the BAS degree is to fill gaps in curriculum. None of the schools in the Church Educational System or any Utah school offers a Certified Management Accountant program.

Q: When will the degrees begin to be offered?

A: Fall 2021

Q: Online learning is everywhere now. What is so remarkable about Ensign College’s entry?

A: Actually, Ensign College has been offering online courses for several years now, so it’s not really an entry but an expansion. Three of our existing certificate programs are being offered now through BYU-Pathway Worldwide and BYU-Idaho online.

Q: What are your plans for expansion then?

A: Ensign College’s curriculum will continue to be unique within the Church Educational System in its focus on job-ready skills. There are members of the Church around the world that will benefit from having access to the College’s curriculum online.

Q: Are you competing with BYU-Pathway Worldwide and BYU-Idaho?

A: Not at all. What we will be offering will be complementary to what BYU-Idaho is doing. There are programs they offer that we don't or won't and vice versa. We will develop a closer relationship with BYU-Pathway Worldwide through a service agreement. We will also be working closely with BYU-Idaho to have articulation agreements in place.

Q: Will you be serving students around the world?

A: Yes. We do this now and anticipate we will serve even more in the coming years.

Q: Do you have specific programs in mind that will be offered online?

A: Medical Billing and Coding is one of our programs that will soon be offered online. We also are looking at a Project Management.

Q: These are certificate programs. Do you anticipate offering degrees online?

A: Yes. Our Associate of Science degree will eventually be available online, as will our BAS degrees. We may also offer several of our Applied Associate of Science degrees online.

Q: Will BYU-Pathway Worldwide students who are now BYU-Idaho students become Ensign College students?

A: Those are some of the details we are working on with BYU-Pathway Worldwide. Ensign College will award the credit for BYU-Pathway Worldwide students enrolled in Ensign College programs.

Q: Can you describe the relationship between BYU-Pathway Worldwide and the College?

A: The two institutions will enter into a service agreement. Ensign College will continue to develop its curriculum as it does today. A fundamental difference will be that all certificates and degrees offered by Ensign College will be labeled as Ensign College curriculum. Additionally, as mentioned above, Ensign College will be the institution granting credit and providing transcripts.

Q: Will students who come to the Salt Lake City campus be able to complete certificates and degrees online?

A: Certainly. The same online courses, certificates, and degrees offered through BYU-Pathway Worldwide will be available to our students. The only exception is for international students who have a limit on the number of online courses they can take as a condition of their student visa status.

Q: What effect, if any, do you anticipate this will have on enrollment? Are you expecting significant growth?

A: We anticipate this will have a positive effect on our retention, as many students will be able to stay and finish a bachelor's degree with us if they choose. We also anticipate that these changes will have a positive impact and influence on choosing Ensign College. We certainly hope to see modest growth as a result of the changes.

Q: What about hiring more faculty and staff?

A: We believe we can serve more students with our existing staff. Because we use adjunct faculty to teach much of our curriculum we can respond to enrollment growth quickly as that becomes necessary.

Q: What are the expectations that the Church and academic authorities have about the Ensign College students?

A: It would not be appropriate for me to say how much the Church spends on educating its youth each year. But if you knew, you would be staggered by the amount. They do it because they know the potential of those that come to Church schools. They know the benefit and blessing of those that have the opportunity to be educated at a Church school. I've never heard a member of the First Presidency say, "We're spending too much on these kids." They're very concerned in making sure that money is wisely spent, but I've never heard them complain that we're spending too much on education.

If there's one expectation – it's that those who come to a Church school live their lives with gratitude for the rest of their lives. At least half, if not three quarters of your education is funded by the Church. As expensive as it is to come, the Church is paying for most of your education. If we didn't have the Church's generous support, students would have to pay three times as much as they are to come here.

Q: What is the purpose of changing the catalog?

A: Courses are tested before they're launched. I think we have some of the best instructional designers in the Church. Their capabilities are amazing. We don't intentionally build courses that we think would be problematic. When I first came here, we were issuing three academic catalogs a year. One for every semester. Nobody seemed to appreciate the nightmare that it was creating. Now, we're down to just one a year. I think that's helped with some of the confusion around counseling.

Q: I appreciate that at Ensign College we combine secular and spiritual learning. How would you recommend we approach learning so we grow in both ways?

A: To combine secular and spiritual learning, I would first recommend you recognize that all learning is spiritual. We're taught that "...by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5). The Lord doesn't limit this promise to spiritual things. When we realize that all learning is spiritual, it changes our approach to learning. Next, nothing we learn is wasted knowledge. Whatever "...intelligence we [gain] in this life... will rise with us in the resurrection" (Doctrine and Covenants 130:18). In the eternities, as we become perfect, we'll need to possess every kind of knowledge. And, if you feel you learn something now and forget it next semester, don't worry because the Holy Ghost will "...bring all things to your remembrance" (John 14:26). It's our responsibility to learn all we can so we can become like Heavenly Father.

Q: How would you define Ensign College?

A: I would define Ensign College as a place of learning. It's a place that supports learning in a flexible way so students can manage family, work and school. This is a different type of education; one that's focused on job skills and helps us be more employable. We have amazing teachers and leaders. We're taught here by the Spirit, which makes a huge difference. We're next to Church headquarters and benefit from the leadership and testimonies of nearby Church leaders. We're all in this together. The College is preparing future leaders — leaders in homes, at work and in the Church. We'll become spiritual leaders for the world, and we'll help change the world.

Q: What would you say is the focus of Ensign College?

A: The focus of Ensign College is to give you skills so you can get a better job. We practice deep, engaged learning where students help guide curriculum and deliverables. We put students in situations like what they'll experience in the real world, so when the time comes, they're able to contribute in the workplace from day one. Many of our students continue their education, and that's great. Whatever they do after they leave here, they'll be able to support themselves and their families better.

Did you know that all Ensign College graduates benefit from automatic admission to BYU-Idaho online? This allows our associate degree graduates to work on a bachelor's degree from anywhere in the world, at a very affordable tuition price.

Q: Does the College guarantee job placement?

A: Job placement is not something that we can guarantee. But, we work diligently to provide students with a skills-based education to help increase the chance of employment after graduation, either with an associate degree or professional certificate. I (President Kusch) recently visited with some companies in Mexico where we're investigating potential internships for our students, especially those who call Mexico their home. We hope to have a more formal internship opportunity and requirement for our students in the next year or two.

Q: How do professional certificates at Ensign College help students?

A: Students come here to get certificates to improve specific employable skills. For example, we have a new Microsoft certification available to students. Certificates that demonstrate proficiency with software are particularly appealing and helpful to people who are mid-career. It helps them update their skillset to be more employable or get a pay raise. Often, companies are willing to pay tuition for employees to receive additional training.

Q: What would you say is the scope of what Ensign College provides students?

A: Ensign College is a place where students come to get job-related skills. They come to gain new skills or further refine existing skills. We offer, first and foremost, a skills-based education. Secondly, we prepare students for additional education, like a bachelor's or graduate degree. Ensign College is a great place for a student to get started.

Q: How does Ensign College contribute to the state of Utah? What can we do to contribute more? What is the most important skill that students at Ensign College can refine?

A: What we contribute to the state of Utah is the students themselves. And our employees. That's what we contribute. What more could we contribute to the state of Utah?

Q: I understand 37 percent of this year's graduating class were international students. How do you see the role of the College in serving international students changing, if at all?

A: We love and welcome international students. We appreciate the diversity of thought and experience they bring to our campus. Many of them come to Ensign College because a family member, friend or Church leader recommended the school to them. They've heard of good experiences here, so they want to see for themselves. We expect about a quarter of our students to continue to be international students. We have a few constraints when it comes to serving them, providing: 1) campus employment (which is required for the F1 Student Visa), 2) student visa assistance, and 3) housing. We're currently looking at ways to provide additional housing options near campus.

Q: What's the process for hiring adjunct instructors?

A: We are always looking for quality teachers. We have consistent ads running, encouraging applications. Reviewing applications and interviewing candidates is an ongoing process. As we have needs for additional instructors, we interview and have the candidate teach a class. If it's a good fit, we invite them to join us. Our Institute of Religion instructors and full-time professors teach about 25 percent of all student credit hours, leaving 75 percent of student credit hours to be taught by adjunct instructors. This is a relatively unique model in higher education that provides several benefits to our students. They're able to learn from real-world practitioners and are taught current, practical

knowledge, skills and abilities for their chosen profession. Ensign College students are also able to become connected to an adjunct instructor's professional network, often leading to internship and full-time employment opportunities. We continually accept and review student feedback to ensure we maintain a quality learning environment.

Q: What are current student internship opportunities and will there be more opportunities in the future?

A: Many of our students find internships in their field through connections their instructors have. Some of our programs highly recommend internships to help qualify students for an offer of full-time employment. Earlier this year, I went with our VP of student services to Mexico to investigate internships for our students there. We went to Mexico because, after the U.S., the next largest group of students comes from Mexico. We met with several well-known companies and brands and are investigating setting-up internship opportunities there. We would like to be able to provide internships for our students in their home countries.

Q: Are there plans to add new programs and classes at Ensign College?

A: Yes, there are plans to add new programs and classes at Ensign College. We're always looking for and working on a curriculum that is skills-based and would help our students be prepared to make a significant contribution in the workplace from day one.

Q: Along the lines of 'deep learning,' how do students seek out courses and coursework where they can be agents and not objects?

A: We should always put students in the middle of crafting course experiences and outcomes. Professors may have some ideas, and present the class with guidelines, and then let students define key elements of their course experience — a project, a presentation or other deliverable.

Our professors should be resources and provide inspired direction along the way while the students work and learn. This mirrors the way America works. None of us here report to work and expect a supervisor to detail every few minutes of our day. We plan to receive an assignment and the resources needed to accomplish the task, reporting back along the way for continued guidance.

Q: Can you explain a little more about the changes to degrees and certificates at the College that began in Fall 2019?

A: Ensign College was founded with the idea that this was a place where students would come and get skills and be prepared to go into work.

There was a decision made to focus on skills-based education. We wanted to reinforce that idea. The decision was made to focus almost exclusively on Applied Associate's degrees. These are generally not transferable. Even though students were directed down this path, many still planned to transfer. When they tried to transfer to a four-year school, they were told that their degrees wouldn't be accepted nor much of anything that they had done.

For the last several years we've been looking at what adjustments we could make that would improve our institution and serve the desires and needs of our students.

The preferred path now is an Associate of Science degree, which is fully transferable. We now emphasize also doing one or two certificates along with that degree. You do the skills stuff first, so even if you don't finish everything with the degree, you're left with something that will leave you much more employable.

That's the idea behind this new degree. We feel this will serve the needs of the students that want to transfer and also the students who want to jump right into their career. That's the strategy behind what we've done and why we've done it. We think it will better serve our students and fulfill our purpose to help students become more capable and trusted disciples of Jesus Christ.