# Concept Paper

# Development Trajectory for 2021

In 1921, four young men, who graduated from the Madras Christian College, founded a college in a remote corner of the Travancore State, Alwaye (Aluva). It was founded on an ecumenical basis and was an entirely local initiative. At the time, Alwaye was by no means a Christian stronghold, but a fore lone place inhabited by the most deprived in Indian society, and the college was established in a land gifted by the Maharaja of Travancore, with the conviction that they were serving in the mission of Christ and becoming agents of his liberating mission of creating wholesome individuals capable of making great sacrifices in behalf of their fellow human beings.

**While strongly rooted in Christ and his mission, they unambiguously made it clear that their educational endeavor would be a secular activity undertaken as part of their efforts to shoulder “the day’s burdens among the many tasks that confront the nation at the present time”.** It was their well thought out conviction that the college should depend on and must remain accountable to the state and society.

The college started as a completely residential institution to create opportunities for greater student-teacher interactions outside the class room, which the founding fathers considered essential to developing wholesome individuals. The education was more or less in the form *Gurukula* system of education. They were also keen to maintain a cosmopolitan ethos by entertaining foreign scholars in the campus as co-workers, which continued till 1969, when the government refused to issue visas for such foreign nationals.

The cultural ethos of sacrificial service that the founding fathers embodied inspired many students to reach out to the Dalit population who lived around the college campus, and they along with another faculty form Britain, William Hooper, established the Alwaye Settlement with the objective of providing sustenance and education to Dalit children, especially orphans. The other two institutions that were established as part of the extension activities of the college were Christhava Mahilalayam School for the education of girl children and the Rural Medical Mission.

The most salient and unique feature of the college is its fellowship method of administration. Originally, the day to day activities of the College was administered by a group of Christian faculty belonging to the co-operating Christian denominations, who contributed a certain percentage of their salary for the running of the College and committed themselves to serve the institution as their life-long vocation. While due to many exigencies of circumstances, especially due to the change in the pattern of State support to the College and associated legal requirements, the original Fellowship had to be watered down in its role. It still remains as a constituent in the governance of the College with the nomenclature, Inter Church Fellowship (ICF). Today, the College is owned by the Union Christian College Association constituted by the representatives of the ICF and representatives from the four Co-operating Churches. **The ICF, to a great extent , ensures faculty participation in administration, unheard of in any of the private Colleges in Kerala.**

**Building on these unique traditions of the college and keeping in focus the specific challenges posed by global realities, by 2021, we are committed to catapult the college to another developmental trajectory that takes into account the revolutionary changes brought about by information technology and associated knowledge explosion, redefinition of education as knowledge creation, renewed concern for global interconnectedness and global citizenship, and a development that is life affirming and sustainable.**

**The Challenges**

**The affiliating university system**, inherited from the British, had helped us in the early phase of higher education in India. However, today, it has become a stifling system that prevents colleges from being distinctive, creative and innovative in meeting the demands of a rapidly changing world and knowledge society, and strive towards academic excellence. While this College has the cultural and organizational and requisite intellectual resources and capability, “autonomy’, which had been one of its dream since late 70s, eludes us. The attitude of the State to academic autonomy, the general perception of autonomy as making the college not accessible to the general population in the neighborhood, and the fear of the faculty that the College would be forced to follow the self-financing route and associated insecurities and many other factors worked against the College’s attempt to become autonomous despite repeated assurances from the administration.

**One of the most important challenges that we face today is the dramatic changes in the way one acquires knowledge through electronic resources (information technology) and sifting through the massive “information overload”.** This also calls for a redefinition of education as knowledge creation - the product of the interplay between knowledge and knowing through practice, action and interaction - and educational institutions as knowledge societies that generate, share and make available to all members of the society knowledge that may be used to improve the human condition. This demands a whole lot of changes in pedagogy, student-teacher relationship, class room behavior, infra-structural requirements, and the way we conceive the role of library, laboratory etc.

**The neoliberal economic order and globalization** as a cultural phenomenon resulting both from market determinism and rapid developments in information technology have thrown up significant challenges to the college. The educational and cultural ethos, the way in which one understands the role higher education, is facing a profound transformation.

1. In the context of gradual withdrawal of government from service sectors such as education, especially higher education and its increasing privatization and commercialization, we witness the mushrooming of a set of new generation professional colleges and universities, whose primary objective is profit. Education has ceased to be a charitable enterprise. Instead of a social good, it is being conceived as private good engaged in by private individuals; it is thought of as a good investment that students or their parents make expecting good returns. This poses a threat to UCC’s liberal arts and science tradition that is committed to producing intellectually competent, socially committed, morally upright and spiritually inspired wholesome persons.
2. While there is a lot of tall talk about education being knowledge creation and colleges being knowledge societies, education has become plagued by a narrow reference of shaping human resources to a high-value product in the job market, often ill-equipped to deal with the challenges of life.
3. The neo-liberal economic policies have come full circle that today, many of its votaries such as the US and the many European nations are trying to protect their economy against global market forces. This produces narrow nationalist jingoism and irrational hatred of minorities and expatriates. The ‘global village’ created by the advancements in information technology, instead of producing global citizens, are creating ghettos and bigots.
4. Educational financing has become a crucial concern in the context of the growing developmental needs and decreasing share of the contribution of the state to meet the same while following ethical and transparent means to raise funds for its development.

**Strategic objectives**

These challenges demand greater involvement of UCC in its educational vocation with the following objectives and action plans as it approaches the centenary year.

1. **Faculty Development**: Development of a workforce/faculty highly motivated, exposed and trained in the use of electronic resources and information technology in the teaching/learning process and capable of inducting students into the task of knowledge creation with appropriate pedagogical methods.
2. **Wholesome development of students**: Achieve wholesome development of students by linking their subjects of study to real life situations and its challenges and by facilitating life skills/soft skills, moral sensitivity and civic responsibility through add-on courses, service-learning, active involvement of teachers and students in clubs and societies, and exposure to models of alternative, sacrificial and creative living.
3. **Development of Electronic Resources and a world class library**: Provide Electronic resources and facilitate e-learning and build a world class library that would be a hub of knowledge creation and exchange, extension of knowledge to the community (service-learning), international linkages and documentation of community resources
4. **Develop a Center for Educational Research, Innovation and International Linkages (CERIIL):** Facilitate educational research and policy studies, prepare the college to take on the challenges ahead, offer courses in cutting edge areas of knowledge and education and offer educational programs for an international clientele.
5. **Restore and enhance Residential Life:** Restore residential life to attract talents from beyond the state and India, develop world citizens, and achieve wholesome development of students with maximum opportunity for teacher-student interaction transcending narrow barriers of caste, creed and nationality.
6. **Maintenance and Development of Infrastructure:** Restore our heritage sites such as the Cutcherry Malika, gifted to us by the then Maharaja of Travancore (which remains a monument under the Archaeological Survey of India) the College Chapel, Chacko Hostel, Varkey Memorial Hall (VMA Hall) etc. and provide a facelift to the class rooms and other physical amenities in the campus.
7. **Enhance Student services:** Enhance the areas of student services such as counselling, vocational and career guidance, and placement, and develop the canteen to be a space for free flow of ideas and interaction across cultures and gender.
8. **Firm up a Centre for Service Learning and Consultancy Services (CSLCS):** Make service-learning and extension to the community integral to education with CSLCS acting as a nodal center to coordinate departmental initiatives in this matter and identify and facilitate service and consultancy opportunities in the community.
9. **A fully functioning Development office:** Make the Development Office fully functional to act as nodal center for the integrated management of relationships to increase understanding and support among key constituents, including alumni and friends, industry, foundations and other funding sources, international partners, policy makers in government, the media, members of the community and other entities to further the strategic objectives of the college in integrating, transmitting and applying knowledge. It also has the responsibility of coordinating the various constituencies of the college and of facilitating the envisioning of its goals and priorities in keeping with its distinctive traditions and values.
10. **Consensus building over Autonomous status:** Sustained effort to achieve academic autonomy or deemed University status to make a quantum leap in living out its distinctive heritage and thus, march towards academic excellence with wholesome development of individuals committed to the value of service to humanity.

**Some of these schemes and programs are already in place and is running and we expect them to be complete by 2021. Others are yet to commence for want of greater planning, deliberation and consensus among various constituencies.**

This concept paper is shared with the various constituents and governing structures of the college and with their feedback, it will be fine-tuned. Ten sub-committees will work on each of these strategic objectives and develop an action plan, timeline and budget. They will be documented and put into reality by a Developmental Task Force.