ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

acu connected
MOBILE LEARNING INNOVATION
www.acu.edu/connected

Media Contact:
Liz Anderson
(254) 722-6030
liz@ehandersonpr.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ACU's Graduate School of Theology to Deploy iPads for Contextual Ministry Research
Charitable Foundation Funds $10K Grant for Technology

ABILENE, TX March 28, 2012 – Abilene Christian University, a recognized leader in the use of mobile technology within higher education today announced that its Graduate School of Theology will deploy ten iPads for students to conduct contextual ministry field research during the spring of 2012. The purchase of the technology was made possible by a $10,000.00 grant from the James A. "Buddy" Davidson Charitable Foundation of Midland, Texas.

"The purpose of the research is to better prepare my fellow graduate students for the rigors and demands of ministry," said James Prather, president of ACU's Graduate Student Association. "The use of the iPad technology will assist students in identifying the contextual expectations of their chosen field."

The research to be conducted by ten graduate students in Dr. Tim Sensing's "Contexts of Ministry" course (BIBM657) will conclude in May 2012 with the findings to be presented at the January 2013 biennial meeting of the Association for Theological Field Educators in Williamsburg, VA. The use of the mobile technology by the ten students marks the first opportunity for graduate students to participate in the university's ongoing mobile learning initiative.

Participants in the course are first asked to identify a field they are passionate about from a range of ministries that include; community development, social justice, congregational nurture and transformation, global contexts and emerging church forms, and chaplaincy. Each field offers its own unique set of challenges.

Students previously used handwritten field notes and audio recordings to capture interviews in their ethnographic research related to the history, demographics, stories, traditions, people, and events associated with a particular ministry. The techniques used to process and analyze the data involved tedious hours, complex coding methods, and expensive software. The process was not always successful due in part to the student's lack of time and technical expertise.

With the introduction of the mobile, user-friendly, and intuitive iPad2 technology, it is anticipated that students can now conduct ethnographic research, share their findings with peers and professors in real-time, and present the results of their research in days instead of weeks. While the students are using the iPads to conduct their research, Dr. Sensing will be analyzing the efficacy of the technology as an educational tool for ethnography.

"Ethnography is a skill these students can utilize as they encounter various fields of ministry in order to enhance their pastoral practice," said Dr. Sensing. "The use of mobile technology not only will simplify the process but holds the promise of innovation that could facilitate how ethnographic research is conducted. We are thrilled about the possibilities and truly grateful to the Davidson Foundation for their generous grant."

ABOUT ACU'S MOBILE-LEARNING INITIATIVE, CONNECTED

In a world of search engines, social networking, smartphones, and converged mobile devices, students have access to more information than one could process in a lifetime, Abilene Christian University launched a mobile-learning initiative, Connected, in 2008. The initiative trains students to not merely consume these vast amounts of information, but to assess information, to synthesize thoughts, to generate new ideas, and to contribute meaningfully to conversations of global importance. ACU is committed to exploring how these technologies can be used to help people learn in new ways and discover how these tools can aid us in its mission to educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world. More than 4,500 students, including nearly 800 graduate students, enroll in ACU from 47 states and territories, and 41 nations. Visit
http://www.acu.edu/technology/mobilelearning/research/index.html for more information.

<div align="center">###</div>

iPhone, iPod touch and iPad are trademarks of Apple Inc.