

September 15, 2026

The Honorable Linda McMahon

U.S. Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
Washington, DC

Re: Houghton University's America 250 Statement of Principles

Dear Secretary McMahon:

Houghton University is honored to join in celebrating the United States of America's 250th anniversary of its founding. As Houghton's President, I appreciate and accept your invitation to clearly and unequivocally articulate Houghton's principles, commitments, and convictions during this semiquincentennial celebration. Houghton University reaffirms its enduring commitment to preparing students to lead lives of character and purpose as scholar-servants and ambassadors for Jesus Christ in a rapidly changing world.

For nearly a century and a half, Houghton University, located in New York State's Southern Tier, has prepared graduates who positively impact their communities, the nation, and the world. We believe higher education serves the nation best when it forms individuals who pursue truth with humility, engage respectfully across differences, and work collaboratively to address new and longstanding challenges facing the United States and the world. A Houghton education prepares graduates to meet current industry demands and solve tomorrow's problems. Further, Houghton graduates courageously pursue truth, knowing that, as Augustine observed, all truth is God's truth.

Rigorous Teaching and Academic Excellence

Houghton faculty are exceptionally well prepared in their disciplines, with the vast majority holding terminal degrees in their fields of study. Faculty members in professional disciplines also bring substantial real-world experience and expertise to their teaching. As a Christ-centered teaching university, Houghton recruits and employs Christian faculty and staff who share the institution's core faith commitments. Apart from faith alignment, Houghton neither discriminates nor uses preferences in hiring or promotion based on race, ethnicity, gender, politics, or ideology. The University values and protects political and ideological diversity, recognizing that such diversity contributes to a vibrant academic community.

Houghton remains committed to rigorous teaching and learning. Our liberal arts and sciences curriculum challenges students to think critically, communicate effectively, and solve complex problems. We believe intellectual growth requires both curiosity and disciplined inquiry. Houghton students are challenged to think, question, and grow. The University will continue to uphold high academic standards, support outstanding faculty teaching and scholarship, and equip graduates with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead and serve in a complex and changing world.

Access, Inquiry, and the Pursuit of Truth

Since its founding by Willard J. Houghton and The Wesleyan Methodist Connection in 1883, Houghton has operated as a distinctly Christian institution. We continue to operate as such with the sponsorship of The Wesleyan Church. Houghton students hail primarily from the American Northeast, but also come from other U.S. regions and territories, and abroad. Most Houghton students profess the Christian faith, but the University welcomes and enrolls students from other faith traditions or no faith tradition. The University neither discriminates nor applies preferences in admissions or financial aid decisions based on gender, race, ethnicity, ideology, or political affiliation. Houghton is committed to remaining a Christ-centered learning community that welcomes students from diverse backgrounds and traditions.

As a Christ-centered university, Houghton affirms the authority of the Holy Bible and integrates orthodox Christian doctrine throughout teaching, learning, and scholarship. Within that framework, faculty encourage thoughtful exploration of ideas and welcome honest questions about humanity, society, science, culture, and faith. We believe institutions of higher education are strongest when ideas can be examined openly and respectfully. Houghton remains committed to being a learning community where disagreement is met with civility, dialogue, and mutual respect, preparing students to participate constructively in a pluralistic society.

Service to Community and Nation

America needs more Houghton graduates. Our graduates are servant leaders educated through a timeless multidisciplinary curriculum and prepared to meet the expectations of their professions. They are committed to living and working respectfully, collaboratively, and ethically.

Houghton affirms its commitment to preparing graduates who contribute to the well-being of the United States with humility, integrity, and creativity. We prepare graduates for meaningful and rewarding careers in business, industry, healthcare, law, and technology. At this critical moment in history, we are also committed to preparing graduates who will work with and lead responsibly in the age of artificial intelligence. At the same time, we remain equally committed to preparing students for service-oriented callings in ministry, missions, education, public service, and the nonprofit sector.

The American people rightly expect colleges and universities to prepare graduates for immediate employment and long-term vocational success. Houghton is committed to meeting and exceeding those expectations. Regardless of career path, we seek to prepare scholar-servants who use their education for God's glory and the benefit of others, especially those who are most vulnerable and marginalized.

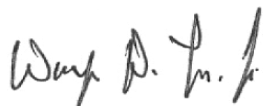
Looking Toward America's Next 250 Years

For 143 years, New York and the United States have been Houghton's home. As prevailing cultural norms diverge from traditional Christian values, the number of Christ-centered universities in the Northeast has diminished. Yet Christian students and families continue to seek educational institutions that align with their convictions or, at minimum, do not require them to compromise those convictions. One of the great strengths of American higher education is the diversity of educational options available to students. Houghton remains committed to being one of the few intentionally Christian, academically rigorous universities serving New York and the broader Northeast United States.

I am grateful for the constitutional and statutory protections that allow institutions such as Houghton to operate in a manner consistent with their religious mission. While legal and political challenges have tested those protections, they have thus far endured. My prayer is that these freedoms will continue to be protected so that Houghton may equip future generations of God-honoring scholar-servants committed to serving America and the world, pursuing truth and excellence, all for the glory of God.

Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to contribute to this national reflection as America commemorates 250 years of independence and liberty. I pray for wisdom and guidance for you as you lead, and I pray for God's continued blessings for America.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Wayne D. Lewis, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Wayne D. Lewis, Jr.

President