Religious Studies Department Memo

To: Professional Development Committee

From: Charles Farhadian, Department of Religious Studies

Date: October 29, 2008

Re: Faculty Development Grant Report

I am pleased to announce that I accomplished the tasks that I set out to complete with the funding provided by a Faculty Development Grant. The objective of the grant was to work on a book project called The Testimony Project: Papua by 1) writing an introductory chapter for the book, 2) work with my photographer & graphic artists to layout and format the manuscript, 3) travel to West Papua (Indonesia) to complete interviews and help with photographing Papuan leaders, 4) travel to Jakarta (Indonesia) to seek a publisher for the manuscript. The Testimony Project: Papua is a manuscript featuring organic narratives of Christian leaders in West Papua, Indonesia. The project is the second in a series that illuminates the social, cultural, and political environments of worldwide Christianity. Working with a professional photojournalist, each Testimony Project seeks to present the stories of lay and elite Christians from around the world, illustrated with visually compelling images. The photojournalist and I had already done preliminary work in West Papua, but in order to complete the project I needed to finish the interviews, assemble the manuscript, and seek a publisher in Indonesia. The project was timely because it highlights the lives of Christians living in the largest Muslim country in the world.

During the grant period I traveled to Indonesia, completed the interviews of Papuan leaders, and negotiated a contract with a publisher. In addition, I was able to complete the Introduction to the book. One of the most challenging aspects of the project was working in two languages, English and Indonesia. I worked closely with a translator to make sure we achieved our goal of having two separate language editions. The project was quite successful. (In fact, Archbishop Desmond Tutu contacted me to request a copy of the final project.) The project has already begun to further the mission of Westmont by exposing students to the worldwide Christian movement as well as educating readers about the ethnic and cultural plurality implicit within Christianity. Given the inaccessibility of Papua to international observers and journalists, the book has appealed to human rights workers and church leaders interested in the ongoing human rights violations occurring in that region. The book has also been read by over a dozen US Congresspersons.