WINONA LAKE, IND.—Starting fall 2011, Grace College will offer a three-year accelerated degree in each of its 50-plus major areas of study, enabling students to enter the workforce or pursue a graduate degree more quickly. With the accelerated degree option, students could graduate with a Bachelor’s degree in three years or with a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree in four.

Grace hopes the new program will help students not only earn a quality education in less time and for less money, but also gain more real-life experience with a focus on applied learning. The faculty and staff have spent the past year developing the program in response to student and family financial concerns.

“We have listened to people’s concerns about [the cost of] higher education and we are answering them,” said Grace President Dr. Ronald Manahan. “This is radical for us. There is risk, but the risk is far greater if we do not do [this].”

Grace College is among the first colleges in the nation to introduce an accelerated program that can be applied to all of its undergraduate degrees.

The idea of the accelerated degree began receiving national and political consideration last fall when Sen. (R-Tenn.) and former U.S. Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander publicly addressed the need for three-year options in higher education. Grace, which began developing its three-year accelerated degree in June 2009, has received support from Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels, who recently began pushing for more Indiana colleges and universities to offer accelerated degree options.

“Grace College is showing the academic innovation and leadership for which it is known,” said Daniels. “This recent move is exactly the sort of new alternative I had hoped for in asking universities to create a three year option for students.”

Students who graduate in three years are able to not only save one year’s cost of tuition, but can also begin their career a year early, working and earning in their chosen field. Grace estimates that the money saved plus the money earned will reduce the cost of college by approximately 50 percent.
“I am sure that many students will take advantage of this opportunity to enter the workforce a year early and save up to 50% of the cost of their education,” said Daniels.

The new program is designed to help students achieve their degrees at a quicker pace without sacrificing academic rigor. Classes will be structured into two 8-week sessions per semester, focusing on two to three courses per session, in order to maximize efficiency in learning. Students who wish to complete their Bachelor’s degrees in three years will also take two online classes each summer, enabling them to live and work anywhere.

The new structure seeks to strengthen Grace’s competency-based curriculum and heavily emphasizes applied learning. Students will be required to participate in at least 12 credit hours of hands-on learning experiences; this could include, but is not limited to, opportunities such as study abroad, internships, collaborative research projects, and student teaching.

Grace College is an evangelical Christian community of higher education which applies biblical values in strengthening character, sharpening competence, and preparing for service. The academic, residential, athletic, and social aspects of the college are designed to encourage intellectual and spiritual growth in a supportive campus community. The 165-acre campus is located in the historic resort town of Winona Lake, near Warsaw, Ind. It has historically been among the top schools of its size and listed in U.S. News & World Report as one of America’s Best Colleges. The Princeton Review has regularly awarded it the title of a “Best Midwestern College.”

For more information on Grace’s programs or to apply online, please visit www.grace.edu/reimagine.

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NEWS OUTLETs: Through the summer, we look forward to sending additional press releases highlighting more focused aspects of Grace’s new program and curriculum changes.