

My Journey with Nazarene Higher Education

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It was in a Nazarene institution that I answered the "control" question in my life. During my sophomore year at Trevecca Nazarene College, something very significant happened to me in one of the special services on campus. In a transforming and transformative encounter, the Triune God gripped my heart in a way I will never forget.

Following the evening service, I returned to my room to pray. I came to the point of saying to God, "If I am going to be a Christian, I want to be the best Christian I can. I don't want to play games. I don't want to go halfway. Here's my life." From the depth of my heart, that night I spoke a "forever yes" to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

A biblical passage came to me during this spiritual encounter that continues to be my life verse: "*Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it*" (Matthew 16:25 NIV).

During those College years I found my beautiful marriage partner for life (now approaching 57 years)! In addition, I learned how to study, and developed an insatiable desire to learn. The classes taught by Drs. William Greathouse and Dr. John Allen Knight and other godly professors consumed me. I became a "forever" student. And, I was

challenged to live a life of integrity and to begin a lifelong pursuit of Christian character development.

It seems like we were in graduate programs from the time of college graduation until I completed a doctoral program 12 years later. The editorial work at the Nazarene Headquarters in Kansas City while studying at Nazarene Theological Seminary and pastoral work on the Philadelphia District while pursuing additional graduate studies prepared me in ways I was not aware for a four year assignment at the European Nazarene Bible College in Busingen, Germany. Then to a full-time faculty position at Bethany Nazarene College for two years.

These responsibilities equipped me for the five years as president of the Asia Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary (APNTS) in Manila, Philippines. Life-long lessons in tenacity were honed in Manila during the approximately four year process of securing the Philippine government “recognition” of APNTS, the first graduate theological seminary in the Philippines not associated with a university to gain the recognition.

While serving in Manila, I received a call from Dr. Harold Graves, Sr., Mount Vernon Nazarene College Board chair, informing me of my election as president of MVNC. I told him of my recent re-commitments to the global mission of the Church during the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelism in Manila with delegates from 192 countries. I needed clarity from the Lord that my re-commitments could be

reflected in leading a regional college in the United States.

After three days of prayer and solitude, Anne and I accepted the assignment. We communicated to Dr. Graves that “...living outside the United States for 10 of the past 12 years, we believe, will enable us to lead a campus community *to think more globally, live more simply, give more generously, and love more deeply.*”

Early in my tenure at MVNC/U, I shared with the Board of Trustees four priorities to which I should give at least 80 percent of my time: #1 - Spiritual leadership to the campus community; #2 - College-wide strategic thinking, planning, and implementation; #3 - Christian leadership development - locally, regionally and worldwide; and #4 - Major donor cultivation/gifting and endowment development.

What a profound privilege to have guided the institution during its transformation from college to university. Personally signing over 6000 diplomas for MVNC/U graduates during my 18-year tenure were unforgettable and emotion-filled moments.

Following my retirement from Mount Vernon Nazarene University, I was elected as education commissioner and administrator of the International Board of Education (IBOE) for the Church of the Nazarene.

The denomination is blessed with a worldwide system of education. The Church of the Nazarene has 51 colleges, universities and seminaries on

campuses and learning centers in 120 world areas, with resources linked together in a network of support and collaboration under the International Board of Education. Over 50,000 students are enrolled in these institutions, with many of these students preparing for Christian service.

The International Board of Education functions as the global church advocate for education institutions in the denomination. The mission of the IBOE is to serve as a dynamic worldwide consortium of Nazarene universities, colleges, and seminaries to facilitate the mission of the Church of the Nazarene in making Christlike disciples and shaping leaders for local witness and global impact.

The IBOE mission is accomplished through **servicing** as a catalyst for networking, collaboration, and resourcing the IBOE schools, especially in regard to ministerial education; **strengthening** the schools through quality and missional reviews and developing stronger and more effective governing boards for the institutions; **envisioning** the future of higher education in the denomination; and **assuring** theological and doctrinal coherency throughout the system of Nazarene education.

Our education team at the Global Ministry Center in Lenexa, Kansas and the global regional educational coordinators crafted a proposed vision statement as a starting point for discussions regarding a vision for Nazarene higher education.

Nazarene higher education effectively equips students to:

Care deeply,

Study continually,

Think biblically,

Relate ethically,

Live gratefully,

Witness faithfully,

Lead strategically,

Work competently.

As education commissioner, I worked closely with school leaders and their board chairs in the six global regions of the denomination. Out of the interaction with the school leaders and their governing board chairs and members came the book, *Best Practices for Effective Boards*, published by The Foundry Press in Kansas City. To speak at many of the institutions' graduation services was an indescribable privilege.

Upon completion of my assignment as education commissioner, a profound sense of stewardship consumed me. I felt compelled to pass on to a younger generation of emerging Christian leaders what has been so bountifully passed to me through education, assignments, relationships, opportunities and experiences. I must be a good steward of these grace-gifts from the Triune God!

The book, *Leading Decisively! Leading Faithfully! Reflections and Markers* was published in 2016 and is now translated in five languages – Spanish, Korean, Burmese, Portuguese and Italian. The book, designed to be a “multi-lingual, cross-cultural, baccalaureate-level text on leading others in faith communities,” is being translated in 2019 into two additional languages, including one in a creative access country

language. Discussions continue regarding translations into three other languages.

The immense delight of traveling to various Nazarene institutions globally during 2017-19 for “book launches” and conferences is overwhelming. The joy of working along side many of my former students who are now leaders in their districts, regions and institutions cannot be adequately described!

For this first generation student from our family to attend college, going to a Nazarene institution and praying a transforming and transformative “Yes, Lord” has led me on a Spirit-inspired, meaning-filled journey that is still unfolding!

Your faith journey may be different from mine. However, in *your* obedience *you* will experience the same dimension of meaning and purpose as I have experienced.

My wife and I are rich in what counts. We’ve invested our lives in *people* – brothers and sisters in Christ - who seek to understand what it means to be Christian in the context of where they live, lead and work. What a great investment! And, the Spirit-led journey continues!

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