

GREAT EXPECTATIONS...

By E. LeBron Fairbanks, Address Delivered to MVNC Faculty and Staff
Annual Awards' Banquet on Tuesday, August 28, 2001

Introduction

- a. Recently I saw a sign with the words, "Great Expectations..." Immediately, I thought of the words "Attempt great things for God, Expect great things from God." These words were spoken by the great missionary, William Carey, who founded Sarampore College in northeast India. These words embrace the motive and source for our commitment to excellence at MVNC.
- b. In the MVNC 1999-2009 strategic agenda entitled, A COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE, and in the "NEXT STEPS" presentation to the Board in the spring of 2000, we personalized Carey's words to MVNC.
- c. Tonight I want to bring you a report on our progress, and share with you some concerns.

I. UNIVERSITY STANDING UPDATE

As you know the MVNC Board of Trustees voted 39-1 on March 1 to move MVNC to university status, effective August 1, 2002. The Articles of Incorporation identifies the process to be used when the Articles are changed. A name change for the institution requires "concurrence in" the Board action by the Board of General Superintendents of the Church of the Nazarene, and by the eight districts comprising the East Central Region of the Church of the Nazarene. I am very happy to tell you that Board of General Superintendents quickly responded to our request for "concurrence in" the Board action, and as of Monday, August 20, 2001, the last of the annual regional district assemblies meeting this summer unanimously joined in with the other seven district assemblies in concurring with the Board decision. Praise the Lord!

Several MVNC leaders joined Atty. Kim Rose, Bruce Oldham and me as we presented to each district assembly an executive summary of the Board decision, a copy of the revised Articles of Incorporation for Mount Vernon

Nazarene University. Following the presentation of the video, “MVNC, Then and Now”, opportunities were given for questions, and a vote was taken. Only one no vote was registered throughout this process during the summer.

An Ad Hoc committee on University Transition has met twice over the past several weeks. The committee is preparing a detailed timeline and “to do” list for us to follow through the next few months. In the meantime I have several suggestions for us to consider as we approach August 1, 2002:

- * Please do not use the term “university” this year when referring to MVNC even though others outside our school may. If others do refer to us this year as a university, we will not correct them and make it an issue..
- * The contact person regarding transition to university status is Bruce Oldham in his role as Executive Assistant to the President. He is chairing the Ad Hoc Committee. Don’t hesitate to ask Bruce questions related to university transition.
- * Fundamentally, this school year is a year of preparation for the August 1, 2002 official transition date. There will be a window of several months whereby the transition process will begin to intensify -- most likely beginning on June 1, 2002. The 2002-2003 school year will be an extended time of celebration and implementation of the official transition to Mount Vernon Nazarene University.

II. COLLABORATION PROJECT FINAL YEAR

I asked the cabinet recently during our August planning meetings to discuss with me how we can finish strongly with the Teagle Foundation-funded MVNC collaboration project entitled, “Developing a Culture of Collaboration at MVNC.” Some of you know my passion for and commitment to this project.

Strategic Initiative #9, adopted by the Board in 1999, states:

“Identify ways and means to creatively and strategically collaborate with institutions and agencies regarding mutually beneficial academic and administrative partnerships.”

I am on record as stating that a school our size and age will rise or fall during the next twenty five years to the degree they embrace institutional collaboration as institutional strategy and a way of life for working within and between institutions.

Having said this, and knowing my intense commitment to institutional collaboration, the cabinet discussed rather candidly our progress and setbacks over the past two years as we at MVNC seek to make a paradigm shift in the way we work with each other. A workshop is planned this Thursday morning during the faculty institute to highlight campus wide collaborative projects pursued this past year. I have asked Dr. Margie Bennett, the Collaborative Taskforce chairperson, and the senior administrators to give to me by October 1 a list of the collaborative initiatives during the past two years with the specific academic and administrative divisions involved.

I have tried to stay in the background of the project, and let the process work, bumps and all. The cabinet acknowledges some mistakes we have made, while celebrating the successes and the increasing spirit of collaboration among more and more MVNC employees.

Please join me in a commitment to complete year three of this project successfully. I will continue to look for seed money from within the operational budget, foundations, and other external sources to enable us to continue our pursuit of a “culture of collaboration” at MVNC. We are not just involved in a three year “exercise” because we have some funds from the Teagle Foundation. Rather, we are in a lifestyle change that can fundamentally alter the way we work and relate to each other. This dramatic shift must be ongoing, and aggressively pursued. I say this knowing from my experiences on other collaborative ventures at the state and national level that not everyone on campus will feel as passionately as I about this imperative.

Several Task Forces will be working throughout this academic year. Their goals include developing recommendations regarding “streamlining” our administrative processes, and changes in our academic and administrative structures to facilitate institutional collaborative initiatives, improve decision making, and enhance communication campus wide. Support them in their

efforts, and our attempts campus wide to slowly but surely develop a culture of collaboration at MVNC. I really do believe a vibrant and visionary future for MVNC depends on it.

III. 2001 REVISED VISION STATEMENT

In the 1991 strategic agenda document, a vision statement was included that closely paralleled the vision statement in the 1999-2009 strategic agenda. It was an excellent statement, but much too long to be memorized and quoted by employees. Remember the statement?

During the better part of last school year, we worked together on campus to capture in a few words the essence of our institutional vision. The process was fascinating. In late May, the Board approved a statement I feel the MVNC employees formulated:

MOUNT VERNON NAZARENE COLLEGE:

AN ACADEMIC COMMUNITY OF FAITH,
SHAPING CHRIST-LIKE LEADERS
FOR LIFELONG SERVICE.

Ephesians 4:11-13

You have a copy of this statement on your tables. I hope you take the copy with you and keep it close to your work station. I hope you memorize the words!

This vision will remain a lofty dream and noble thought with no significant relationship to the reality on this campus unless it is actualized in and through faculty, staff, and administrators. Increasingly I pray that all of us will view our work at MVNC as a sacred calling, and fulfill our specific responsibilities out of a profound commitment to biblical principles, Christian values, and our theological traditions.

Your calling and vocation at MVNC is as important as mine. I must value you, respect you, support you, coach you, correct you, instruct you, confront you, guide you and encourage you. I seek your counsel, as well. You are my brothers and sisters in Christ as well as my colleagues and co-workers. This

Christianly way of relating to each other in our community of faith should characterize us at our best, and convict us at our worst. If I give up on the belief, however, that little by little we are becoming the academic community of faith we claim to be, I am rendered worthless to you and to this institution.

IV. REAFFIRMING GRACE IN OUR ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

Recently, I read the book, PROMISE AND DESTINY: Grace in the History of Point Loma Nazarene University. The institution, overlooking the Pacific Ocean outside San Diego, California, is celebrating its centennial celebration this year. It is a fascinating story of God's grace in the life and work of the school that began in 1901 as the Nazarene University in Pasadena, California.

As I read the book, though institution specific to PLNU, I continually related the theme of grace to MVNC's rather brief but phenomenal thirty-three year history.

In recent days, I have celebrated more particularly the dimension of grace in the lives of MVNC's faculty, staff, and administrators. I marvel at your stories when I have opportunities to talk with you. Your love for this college is deeply rooted. Work here is far from just a job for you. I know there are exceptions. But I'm choosing not to focus on the exceptions, and instead celebrate with the large majority who believe profoundly in the mission, vision, values, and guiding principles of MVNC.

I want to hear more of these stories. Please share with me your story, and some thoughts on ways you believe we can more obviously function in our individual assignments as a grace-filled community of faith—an academic community of faith shaping Christ-like leaders for lifelong service.

I promise to read every e-mail sent to me. I will not keep score on who does and does not respond, nor can I attempt to reply to each note. I promise, however, to take every message seriously.

CONCLUSION

Before you is placed a booklet, LEAD WITH A SERVANT HEART. I shared these thoughts last year with pastors in a week-long seminar. I ask each of you to read the booklet sometime during the next two weeks. I want

every one of you to view yourself as a leader. Read the book as if I'm writing to you personally. Because I am!

Leadership is influence, and occurs any time a person attempts to influence the life of an individual, or the behavior of a group.

My definition of a Christ-like Leader is “humble service to others for the purpose of enabling them, through teaching and example, to live their lives under the Lordship of Christ, and to understand, accept, and fulfill their ministry to each other and their mission in the world.” Each of us functions as leader at different times in our assignments and responsibilities at MVNC.

Also on your tables are campus plan brochures. When you are “weary in well doing,” review this brochure when you wonder how your specific responsibility at MVNC is making any real difference in the life of the institution. It projects out twenty years to how, in faith, we believe our campus will look in the year 2020. We are often so close to the tall trees that we cannot see the beauty of the forest. We are all involved in the ongoing development of a 401-acre campus that will live on and fulfill the university's mission and vision long after we have departed this life.

By the way, the first meeting of the 32-member Task Force on the new MVNC Gym Convocation Center will meet on September 10, 2001. We will know in September if our request is granted for \$1.4 million dollars for continued renovation of our natural science labs, and 500,000 for the development of our property joining the Kokosing River. A recommendation will be made on November 1, 2001 to the Board of Trustees regarding a consultant to lead us through a feasibility study for capital campaign to fund new construction projects and scholarship endowment.

If it is true that “poverty of purpose is worse than poverty of wealth,” then let us celebrate anew the purpose—the vision—that drew us initially to MVNC and continues to keep us here! Great expectations? Yes! University standing. A culture of collaboration. A dynamic Vision. Grace Reaffirmed in our Academic community. An aggressive 20-year growth plan. Servant hearts! Our passion for excellence and service compels us to do no less than to “ATTEMPT GREAT THINGS FOR GOD, AND EXPECT GREAT THINGS FROM GOD!”

Join me in singing the two verses of “The Servant Song,” printed on page one of the booklet, LEAD WITH A SERVANT HEART. Change the word “brother” to “sister” and sing the first verse again following the second verse.

Brother, let me be your servant;
Let me be as Christ to you;
Pray that I may have the grace
To let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey;
We are brothers on the road.
We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and bear the load.

May it be so Lord, for MVNC’s faculty, staff and administrators. Amen