

THE BAPTIST EDUCATOR



News Journal of the International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities

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IABCU Presidents and CAOs Elect Board Members and Set 2013 Meeting for June 2–4 at California Baptist University

In their annual business meeting June 3 in Little Rock, Arkansas, presidents and chief academic officers of the 51 member schools of the International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities elected four new board members and scheduled the 2013 annual meeting and workshops for June 2–4 in Riverside, California.

President Ron Ellis, and California Baptist University will serve as hosts for the 2013 annual meeting. The headquarters hotel will be the historic Mission Inn in Riverside.

In a departure from past meetings all the conference sessions will be held on the campus of California Baptist University instead of the hotel. Sessions will be in the new state-of-the-art business building scheduled for occupancy with the 2012 fall semester. Special activities are being planned for the annual spouse tour.

Board members elected to terms expiring in June 2016 were Robert Imhoff, president, Mid-Continent University; Dub Oliver, president, East Texas Baptist University; Thomas Brisco, provost, Hardin-Simmons University; and Stan Poole, vice-president for academic affairs, Ouachita Baptist University.

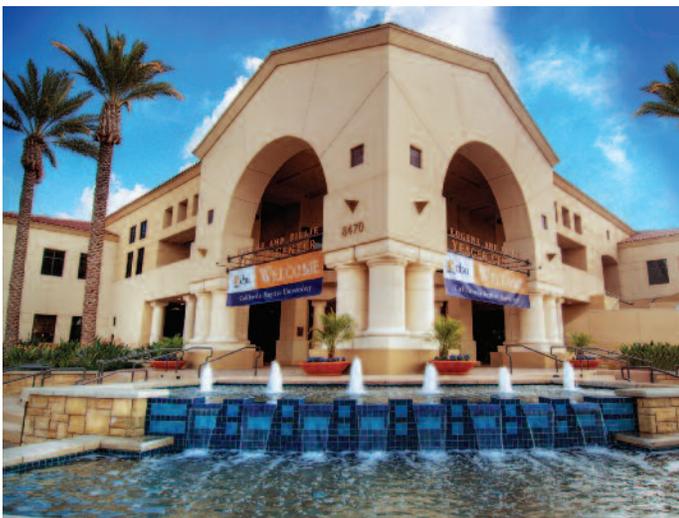
In other action the members approved a 2012-2013 association budget of \$264,475 a slight decrease from the current year's

budget. Budget items include funds for the *Baptist Educator* publication, IABCU website (www.baptistschools.org), partial funding for the Seminar on Academic Leadership in Baptist Universities at Baylor University, contributions to the Baptist College and University Scholars program at Baylor, a two percent salary increase for Mike Arrington, executive director and Tim Fields, associate director, and funding for the 2013 annual meeting.

IABCU Board members elected new officers for 2012-13 during their annual board meeting June 3. Frank Bonner, president of Gardner-Webb University, was elected chair; David Olive, president of Bluefield College, vice-chair and chair-elect; and David Whitlock, president of Oklahoma Baptist University, recording secretary. Arrington will continue to serve as president and treasurer.

The December board meeting and dessert reception that was cancelled last year in a cost-saving move was reinstated for 2012. The board meeting is set for 6–7:50 p.m. on Monday December 10 held in conjunction with the annual SACS/COC meeting. The dessert reception will be from 8–9 p.m. Dec. 10 for faculty staff and friends of the IABCU. Both events will be at the

(Continued on page 2)



The Weager Center welcomes students and visitors to the campus of California Baptist University. The University, founded in 1950 will be the site of the IABCU 2013 annual meeting June 2–4, Riverside California.

New Board Officers
2012–2013



Frank Bonner



David Olive



David Whitlock

New Board Members
2012–2016



Robert Imhoff



Dub Oliver



Thomas Brisco



Stan Poole

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“Legal Notes” is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information on legal issues facing Baptist-related higher education. It is provided with the understanding that the publisher and editors are not engaged in rendering legal counsel. “Legal Notes” is not intended as a substitute for the services of a legal professional. If your institution needs legal counsel, a competent attorney should be consulted.

The Baptist Educator to Begin Transition to Mix of Printed and Electronic Formats

During their meeting June 3, board members of the International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities instructed staff to begin a transition in publishing *The Baptist Educator* from a printed version three times a year to a mix of printed and electronic versions.

Tim Fields, IABCU associate director and managing editor of *The Baptist Educator*, since 1988 said “As mailing and printing costs continue to climb and digital formats are increasingly used by organizations this is both a necessary and a wise move and helping the environment with less paper and ink usage is a plus.”

“Board members have left it up to staff to decide when and how to make the transition,” Fields said. “We will probably do one expanded and improved printed issue each year and two or more digital issues.”

The Baptist Educator now completing its 76th year of continuous publication with this issue, was first published in 1936 by the former Education Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. The publication was entitled *The Southern Baptist Educator* from 1936 to 2006. The publication name was

changed to *The Baptist Educator* in late 1996 when the association changed its name from the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools (ASBCS) to The International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities (IABCU).

The Education Commission was dissolved by the SBC in December of 1996 and the Association received exclusive publishing rights from the SBC beginning in January 1997.

Recent issues of *The Baptist Educator* published by the IABCU are available in pdf format at no charge on the IABCU website at <www.baptistschools.org>.

Fields said the printed issues will continue to be available in digital format on the website as well as the electronic only versions.

Archives of printed issues dating from 1947 to the present are housed at the offices of the IABCU and provide a rich history of information related to Baptist schools, colleges and universities.

A distribution plan for the digital only versions of *The Baptist Educator* has not been finalized. “A combination of group e-mail distribution and posting on the website are envisioned” Fields said. ■

IABCU Presidents...

(Continued from page 1)

Hilton Anatole Hotel in Dallas, Texas.

During the June 4 annual business meeting, members approved a research proposal presented by board member Mark Wyatt, vice-president for marketing and communication, at California Baptist University (CBU).

The research project to be conducted by the Office of Institutional Research Planning and Assessment at CBU will include all IABCU regionally accredited member schools who file federal integrated Post Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS) reports. The project will utilize the most current IPEDS information relevant to the IABCU member institutions and analyze and draw conclusions based on the available data.

The results will be presented at the 2013 IABCU annual meeting at CBU in Riverside California June 2-4.

After the 2013 project IABCU members will determine if they want CBU to

complete additional annual studies using IPEDS data and/or data collected from the entire IABCU membership using member-specific survey questionnaires.

Examples of data to be collected and analyzed include average tuition in four size categories, average enrollment per category, retention rates, graduation rates, gender distribution within each category, faculty and staff demographics, student finances, and institutional finances including revenue and expenses. ■



The new Business Building on the California Baptist University campus in Riverside is the site of the IABCU Annual Meeting and Workshops June 2-4, 2013.

Comment: Baptist Schools Celebrate Milestone in International Education Consortium

By Michael Arrington, Executive Director, International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities

Do you remember when international travel was relatively rare? For most in my peer group, traveling to Asia, Africa, South America, or Europe may have been on our “bucket lists” in the 1970s, but international travel remained the domain of business travelers and the wealthy.

Computer technology has enhanced global communication and opened doors around the world for thousands of faculty, staff and students. However, few could have foreseen the explosion that has taken place in international education exchange programs in higher education, particularly among Baptist colleges and universities, over the last quarter of a century.

International travel has become a relatively routine event for faculty and students on most IABCU campuses. Baptist colleges and universities have been positively affected through a consortium approach that began in the mid-1980s, thanks in large part to the remarkable vision and efforts of a handful of dedicated Baptist educators.

We owe a special debt of gratitude to those who established a cooperative arrangement among IABCU schools interested in starting new international education programs. Originally known as Cooperative Services International Education Consortium, the Consortium for Global Education (CGE) this year celebrates 25 years of remarkable success in establishing and maintaining formal relationships between CGE and over 480 international universities in approximately 80 nations.

The formal celebration will take place September 19-21 on the campus of Oklahoma Baptist University, the site of the first annual meeting of the consortium. Dr. Bob Agee, Dr. Daniel Grant, Dr. Lewis Myers, Dr. John Belew, and many others took the first courageous steps toward establishing



Michael Arrington

It is a remarkable testament to its founders that CGE, under the skilled leadership of Dr. Bishop, continues to open the minds of students and faculty alike through some of the most unique international programs in American higher education.

legitimate high-quality academic exchange programs in areas of the world where Christians typically were viewed with suspicion. The high quality of the academic work validated the credibility of CGE institutions, most of which have benefited greatly through their memberships in the consortium. Dr. Grant and Dr. Agee served respectively as the first two directors of CGE. Dr. Carolyn Bishop became President of CGE in 2002.

Personally, my attendance at the 1986 conference in Oklahoma sparked an enthusiasm for international education that continues today.

In 1988 Pam and I led a group of 16 Ouachita students for a seven-week course in Chinese language and culture at Zhengzhou University. We were surprised and pleased when we had an unexpected encounter at the Summer Palace in Beijing with a group of students from Oklahoma Baptist University. Every person on the 1988 Ouachita trip acknowledged that the China experience opened their minds and their hearts in unexpected ways. Thousands of students and faculty at IABCU institutions have experienced similar life-changing outcomes over the last quarter of a century.

It is a remarkable testament to its founders that CGE, under the skilled leadership of Dr. Bishop, continues to open the minds of students and faculty alike through some of the most unique international programs in American higher education. If that appears to be an exaggeration, consider CGE's relationship with Pyongyang University in North Korea. That ground-breaking program demonstrates, as CGE programs have from their inception, that excellent academic programs create trust and respect that transcends political and theological boundaries.

As IABCU continues to add international Baptist schools to its membership, we gratefully acknowledge the role of CGE's founders for their key role in bringing international programs to our campuses. Happy 25th Birthday to CGE! ■

Baptist Administrators Continue to Train at Seminar on Academic Leadership

After six years, 188 Baptist college and university-related administrators have been trained at the annual seminar on Academic Leadership in Baptist Universities.

With the financial support of several organizations, including the International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities, Baylor University, through its Center for Ministry Effectiveness and Educational Leadership, launched the program in 2007.

The seminar is now open to seventy-five Baptist schools across the United States, including not only IABCU institutions but also American Baptist, independent Baptist, and historically Black Baptist schools. The purpose of the seminar is to provide a leadership development opportunity for academic and other administrators in col-

leges and universities across the country that have a significant historical connection with Baptists.

The seminar is open to a wide spectrum of participants such as department chairs, deans, associate deans, provosts, presidents, program heads, prospective administrators, and others in key administrative positions.

The seminar deals with a range of issues including leadership principles, institutional culture and religious identity, faculty hiring and development, strategic planning and finances, and legal issues.

To learn more about the next seminar set for May 19-23, 2013, contact Don Schmeltekopf at <DonaldSchmeltekopf@baylor.edu> or by phone at (254) 710-7691. ■

ESSAY ONE:

Tradition-Enhanced University Education

Douglas Jacobsen
Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen

EDITOR'S NOTE: Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen delivered the Hester Lectures during the annual meeting of the International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities June 3-5, 2012 in Little Rock, Arkansas, on the topic of "Religion in Higher Education Today." Their presentations were predominantly audio-visual and do not lend themselves to a written presentation. Instead, with their permission we have reprinted the following two articles. Both articles contain ideas presented in their Hester Lectures. This one is adapted from the essay "The Ideals and Diversity of Church-Related Higher Education" in *The American University in a Postsecular Age*, Oxford University Press, 2008, by Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen. Rhonda is Professor of Psychology and Director of Faculty Development and Douglas is Distinguished Professor of Church History and Theology both at Messiah College, Grantham, PA. In addition they serve as co-directors of Religion in the Academy.

The numbers by themselves prove that church-related colleges and universities play a significant role in American higher education. In 2009-10 (the last year with readily available data), about 10 million students were enrolled in four-year undergraduate Bachelor's degree programs in the United States. Roughly two-thirds of these students attended publicly funded schools, and the other third went to private institutions. Of those attending private not-for-profit schools, about 40 percent chose religiously-affiliated campuses—more than one-tenth of the total undergraduate population and over a million individuals in all.

Because religiously-affiliated schools tend to be smaller than their public university counterparts, they constitute about one of every three bachelor-degree-granting schools—more than 750 out of 2,500-plus institutions listed in the United States Department of Education college database. Since schools supply their own information to the national database and decide for themselves whether to list a religious affiliation,



Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen

merely historical connections to a religious body will not automatically translate into current affiliation. For example, both Baylor University and Bucknell University were founded by Baptists, but now only Baylor lists itself as religiously-affiliated. In the United States, there are currently 106 Baptist schools conferring Bachelor's degrees—constituting 14.5 percent of church-related schools and 4.5 percent of all U.S. colleges and universities. Of course that group has significant internal diversity, enfolded a variety of Baptist churches that do not necessarily see eye to eye on all issues—ranging from American Baptists, Southern Baptists, National Baptists, and General Baptists to Free Will Baptists and Seventh-Day Baptists—but there is no doubt that Baptists are a significant presence within American higher education.

The crucial question for Baptist schools, just like all church-related schools, is what difference it makes to be "church-related" (or "Baptist-related") when it comes to the goals and practices of higher education. What does it mean to insert faith self-consciously into the educational equation? Some schools have assumed that church-relatedness must be articulated in observable behaviors such as mandatory chapel for students, statements of faith that faculty are required to sign, or strict codes of behavior that are enforced on campus. Other campuses exert influence in subtler ways that are more qualitative than quantitative, sometimes simply relying on campus educators to embody the attitudes, habits, and values that represent the school's religious identity. At such schools, it is often hoped that saintly exemplars, people who embody what is both best about the religious tradition and best about the academy, will inspire the campus as a whole and serve as a living invitation for students to adopt a similar disposition of learning and faith. For those who favor this "incarnational" approach, it can seem misconstrued or even antithetical to genuine faith when church-related schools strive to express educational goals by way of specific rules and doctrines.

Each church-related college and university will adopt its own particular mix of more or less explicit and more or less implicit ways of

embodying its mission and influencing its students. Some church-related schools choose to actively advocate certain religious ideas and ideals, and they carefully craft curricular and co-curricular programs in that light. Other schools take a more neutral posture when it comes to inserting religion into the

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curriculum or other student programs. Most schools seek to combine these approaches, advocating religious commitments or values in some settings, while adopting a religiously neutral stance in other institutional endeavors.

It is important to note that schools that take a more neutral, hands-off approach are not necessarily being less religious. Take the Society of Friends (Quakers) as an example. For them, a central tenet of faith—one that many Baptists also would affirm—is that religion must never be coerced or forced on anyone, and thus it would be inappropriate for a college or university to stack the religious deck dealt to students in the classroom. Like many public universities and private non-religious schools, non-advocatory church-related colleges and universities have people on staff—chaplains, counselors, and other student life professionals—who are available to provide students with information about religion and to assist students who find themselves embroiled in life-upsetting personal crises of faith. But the neutral approach of these schools intends to communicate that students must decide for themselves what to believe.

Defining and maintaining religious neutrality can, however, be difficult. Does giving all religious groups the same support constitute being neutral, or can schools make reasonable judgments about which religious groups may be present on campus and which may not? Would any church-related college or university allow a religious group on campus that expressly preaches hate? What happens if an individual professor or other staff member begins to boldly advocate one particular religious or anti-religious stance in the classroom? Should the school intervene and mandate neutrality? How does a school prevent a religiously neutral approach from looking like it is simply not interested in religion at all? Neutrality is not as easy as it might first appear.

Neutrality may also, in some circumstances, be an impossible or even undesirable goal. In our post-9/11 world, politicians, commentators, and people on the street, as well as college and university professors and administrators, routinely make distinctions between what they see as good and bad religion, or between what is more often called “true” religion and “extremist” religion. Who has not heard it said that “true” Islam is a religion of peace, and that Muslim “extremists” do not represent the real heart of this venerable tradition? Are such statements fully neutral? Of course, they are not. They recommend certain religious alternatives as superior to others and thus they are, in some sense, advocacy. Even those who are most committed to religious neutrality would likely have few qualms about this kind of modest advocacy.

But not all schools opt for neutrality. Some schools have decided that their calling is to be selectively and proactively advocacy, at least in some situations. Church-related colleges and universities are private institutions and as private institutions they can legally advocate all sorts of things, including religion. Very few church-related schools would any longer seek to *indoctrinate* students into one and only one limited

vision of Christian faith. They understand that genuine education requires personal reflection and selection, that faith is a personal choice that cannot be imposed on anyone. But persuasion is not coercion, and the presentation of one religious option in a manner designed to make it seem more attractive than other options is a form of persuasion. Schools taking a persuasive approach assume that college and university students are fully capable of assessing, and then either accepting or rejecting, whatever religious perspectives their institutions may want to advocate. Even if they may impose some limits on the academic freedom of faculty, they would never try to impose limits on the academic freedom of students.

Religious advocacy can take many different forms. Some schools advocate very specific doctrines and religious rules of life; others focus on faith or values much more generally. Some church-related institutions ask their student life professionals to handle religious matters, trying to keep discussions in the classroom religiously neutral, while others think the classroom is precisely where religion ought to be addressed. Some religious colleges and universities restrict their advocacy to what takes place in theology or Bible classes; others think religion should be discussed across the entire curriculum. All of this can vary greatly in both content and intensity. Every church-related school makes determinations about what is appropriate on its own campus based on its own particular religious traditions.

What church-related colleges and universities cannot do is act as if they have no specific tradition to respect and embody. This would be a form of false consciousness and a denial of particularity. The differences across the various Christian traditions that inform life and learning at church-related institutions of higher learning are not negligible. Even at schools that are now only historically associated with their particular church or denomination, one can often still smell the lingering fragrance of that tradition on campus. For example, visitors to Swarthmore College, which no longer considers itself a Quaker school, might still detect a mix of peaceableness and feistiness on campus that seems distinctly Quakerish. The same applies to all other churches and their schools. Traditions have power.

The word “tradition” is sometimes used as a synonym for religion, as when people speak of the Catholic tradition or the Jewish tradition or the Buddhist tradition. Tradition also describes the active process through which religions reproduce themselves over time and through generations. In order to keep these two notions clear, the religious historian Dale Irvin uses “tradition” for one and “traditioning” for the other. Traditioning involves “reinventing our traditions in order to make them relevant,” and Irvin notes that “nothing less is at stake in this process than the meaning and identity of faith itself, for a truly irrelevant faith will soon die of its own irrelevance, and the identity of the community will pass into the arena of being a historical relic or part of the archive”

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Tradition Enhanced Education...

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(*Christian Histories, Christian Traditioning*, Orbis Books, 1998, p. 41).

Awareness of traditioning as a dynamic of religious faith is relatively new, at least among Christians. Until recently, most Christians thought that religious identity and tradition was passed down in a fairly stable format from generation to generation. But a historical perspective reveals the naiveté of that view.

Traditions change and grow as they are handed down, branching and reconverging, growing laterally and in depth, incorporating or actively rejecting insights from other traditions. But all is not chaos. Like a symphony that progresses through very distinct movements, but constantly reaches back to pick up early note sequences or syncopations, incorporating them in new forms in the ongoing flow of the music, religions maintain their identities by creatively circling around a few key insights, mixing and matching those insights with a welter of other new ideas, values, practices, and concerns that enrich the music and move the rhythm along.

It is these living traditions of faith, and not simple lists of doctrine and dogma, that enhance the education being offered at most church-related colleges and universities. The goal is not to put strictures on what can and cannot be taught; the goal is to add something positive to the excellent education that every college or university in America seeks to offer.

Most church-related schools want to be involved in the growth of knowledge, and they also want to have a positive, practical impact on the world. Schools that are rooted in the same religious tradition will likely share certain general approaches to education, but individual colleges and universities make adjustments as they respond to the particular needs and challenges of different constituencies.

As a result, the schools may look like very different institutions despite their shared denominational affiliation. Beneath the surface, however, one will likely find more similarities than are apparent at first glance, since religious traditions have an abiding influence.

There are many ways that religion can be—and is now being—included in higher education at public institutions as well as at

private and church-related colleges and universities. The religious terrain of higher learning has become incredibly more complex in recent years. But only church-related colleges and universities have the opportunity to provide students with a form of education that is self-consciously grounded in a living religious tradition.

Tradition by itself is not sufficient. It is not sufficient in the realm of faith because ultimately faith has to be personal and self-chosen. And it is not sufficient in the realm of learning either, because learning requires critical thinking, creativity, freedom to explore options, and the right to reject the past. But, especially for undergraduate students, tradition-enhanced learning can be a boon. In an ever more complex world, it offers students a clear point of reference—a package of ideas, ideals, values and practices that gives them something to chew on, to fight with, and possibly embrace. Tradition-enhanced learning not only fosters cognitive development, it also connects learning with personal commitments and community loyalties in an educational program that is designed to nurture a lifelong sense of calling or vocation. ■

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ESSAY TWO:

Six Questions About Religion for Every Baptist-Related University

Douglas Jacobsen
Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen

EDITOR'S NOTE: Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen delivered the Hester Lectures during the annual meeting of the International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities June 3-5, 2012 in Little Rock, Arkansas, on the topic of "Religion in Higher Education Today." Their presentations were predominantly audio-visual and do not lend themselves to a written presentation. Instead, with their permission we have reprinted the preceding article and this article. Both articles contain ideas presented in their Hester Lectures. This essay is adapted from their book *No Longer Invisible: Religion in University Education*, Oxford University Press, 2012.

It takes a good question to get a good answer, and that observation applies to religion as much as to any other subject of inquiry. Ask people how religion connects to the work of higher education, and they often say things like "Religion is just irrational, and it has nothing to do with higher education" or "Let's just leave religion to the churches and synagogues," or "I teach chemistry, and I am very glad that I never have to think about religion." Those responses make sense because the original question is framed so poorly. It is similar to asking someone to explain how nature connects to higher education and getting responses like "Nature is about bugs and worms, and it has nothing to do with higher education" or "Let's leave nature to the farmers and hunters."

There was, of course, a time when university professors would have made precisely those kinds of comments about "nature." At the great medieval universities of Europe, professors thought that the study of nature was beneath them. Medieval university education was about God and logic and law, along with the study of human culture at its best. It was most definitely *not* about bugs and worms. But the times changed, the modern sciences emerged, and the questions about nature became much better formulated: How is the universe structured? What are the characteristics of different materials? How do biological organisms function? Modern scientific questions are directed at specific dimensions of the natural world. All of these dimensions are ultimately interrelated

in nature itself, but the relationships among them can only be explored after something is known about the component parts. Intellectually, nature could never have been digested whole. It had to be divided into reasonable, bite-sized pieces in order to be comprehended, and the same principle applies to religion.

Asking good questions about religion in higher education requires a more nuanced vocabulary, and we suggest dividing "religion in general" into three categories: historic religion, public religion, and personal religion. If religion is a "forest," then these three dimensions of religion can be likened to the undergrowth, the ground cover, and the trees. Historic religion is like the shrubs growing at the eye level of hikers walking through the woods, or like the vines that sometimes hang down into the pathway and whack trekkers in the face. It is the kind of religion that comes pre-labeled as Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, and so on. Personal religion is much easier to overlook, something like the ground cover people walk on without noticing. It corresponds to individual questions of meaning, purpose, values, and morality, which are often infused with

religion even though its presence is frequently not recognized.

Public religion, on the other hand, is like the trees towering over everyone's head; they form a religion-like canopy for society in its entirety, including society's presumptions (and arguments) about truth, the common good, and which public loyalties deserve our focused effort and attention. The trunks of public religion are all around us, but most people rarely look at the

leaves closely enough to identify the various species.

Historic religion is a global presence. About 85% of the world's people are adherents of at least one of the world's many historic religions. Globally, Christianity is the world's largest religion, accounting for roughly one-third of the world's population. More than 75% of all Americans self-identify as Christian, about 16% say they are nonreligious (or religiously unaffiliated), and about 6% follow a non-Christian historic religion.

A university's responsibilities with regard to historic religion derives in part from the fact that religious identity is not entirely voluntary; it frequently can be a "given" aspect of identity similar to ethnicity, class, and gender. The world is a diverse place, and religion is recognized as an important element in the mix. Many colleges and universities have devoted

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Six Questions...

(Continued from page 7)

significant time and energy to implementing programs that help students understand the constructs of culture, race, and sexual orientation, and they are now adding historic religion to that list. Responding appropriately and thoughtfully to the world's religious diversity will require significant reflection and planning on the part of any university, whether it is private or public, but their work is likely to focus on two specific questions. The first deals with religious literacy: *What should an educated person know about the world's religions?* The second focuses on interfaith etiquette: *What are appropriate ways to interact with those of other faiths?*

Public religion is very different from historic religion, but it is religion nonetheless. In the broadest sense, public religion is how a society idealistically presents itself to itself. Public religion defines what a society takes to be true, provides a rationale for that society's way of life, and enumerates the values that society strives to uphold. Rather than being carried and preserved by an identifiable sub-community in society (as is the case with historic religion), the carrier of public religion is society itself. Everyone who is a member of a given society is a participant in that society's public religion. This does not mean that everyone participates at the same level or that everyone agrees about what the content of public religion should be—the so-called culture wars that have dominated American politics for the last four decades illustrate this point—but it does mean that, when the subject is public religion, the distinction between being religious and being secular makes no sense. Everyone has a stake in these matters.

In the United States, this blending of the religious and the secular in public religion goes back to the very founding of the nation. From the start, Christian (and specifically Protestant) ideas and ideals have played a large role in American public religion, and so have Enlightenment appeals to “the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God” and secular appeals to human or humanistic values. Today, the whole spectrum of lifestyles—from the most conservatively religious to the most progressively secular—continue to contribute to the clamorous dialogue of forming and reforming the ideas, ideals, and ways of life that define American public religion. Colleges and universities help students develop an ability to scrutinize, dialogue, evaluate, contest, and critique the many different values and ideas that are hoisted up for public inspection in the ongoing negotiation and debate that constitutes American public religion. One important question that emerges in this context focuses on the issue of truth or knowledge: *What assumptions and rationalities—secular or religious—shape the way we think?* A second question is more moral and political in character: *What values*

and practices—religious or secular—shape civic engagement?

Personal religion is unique to the individual. It is an idiosyncratic collection of whatever it is that provides meaning, purpose, grounding, trust, hope, and a sense of wholeness. In the past, this personal dimension of faith was often solidly connected with historic religion, and the term “spirituality” was used to describe how individual members of a religious community grabbed hold of that faith's particular ideas and practices, adapting them to meet the needs of their personal lives. This older understanding of spirituality still persists, and many people continue to ground their personal faith in historic religion.

In the broader culture, however, it is becoming common to make a distinction between personal spirituality and historic religion, a trend that is especially evident among college and university students. The old historic religious traditions—if they are viewed as total packages to accept or reject—do not

seem to be sufficient for many people, and individuals may choose instead to fashion their own personal bricolages of beliefs and values out of various fragments of historic religion, bits and pieces of popular culture, and, most importantly, their own experiences. Today, people who have no connection with historic religion, including atheists and agnostics, sometimes feel comfortable assembling their own personal religion, and they may

describe themselves as “spiritual, but not religious.” The goal of personal religion or spirituality is also changing. If personal religion was once about finding a changeless refuge in an ever-changing world, it is now often assumed to take the form of fleeting moments of wonder and insight that facilitate the resetting of one's inner compass.

Personal religion is very different from public religion and historic religion. Public religion operates at the level of society as a whole, which means that competing claims about it are properly subject to contestation and debate. Historic religion focuses on what a group affirms to be true and right. But personal religion operates on a different plane entirely. Personal religion *testifies*. It confesses the individual's unique take on the world as refracted through his or her own life. Like all forms of religion, personal religion is expressed both in ideas and actions. Personal religious beliefs are the (often unspoken) convictions that give structure and meaning to individual lives. They shape how a person sees the world, decides what is significant, and responds to new ideas. One question that every college and university must accordingly ponder is: *How are personal convictions related to the teaching and learning process?* Convictions are not, however, merely about beliefs, they are also about how we act and how we relate to others. Convictions are expressed in a person's character and sense of calling or vocation in life. Thus, a final religious question for higher education is: *How might colleges and universities point students toward lives of meaning and purpose?*

Colleges and universities help students develop an ability to scrutinize, dialogue, evaluate, contest, and critique the many different values and ideas that are hoisted up for public inspection in the ongoing negotiation and debate that constitutes American public religion.

These six questions about religion are ones that should be asked by every college and university, and the task of answering them is currently reshaping higher education across the nation. Of course, the process yields very different outcomes across different kinds of institution.

Public universities are rightfully concerned about defining the boundaries for religion on campus. The constitutional separation of church and state forces these schools to ask not only what students need, but what is legally allowed in the public sphere.

Private “secular” colleges and universities face a different challenge: how to decide which religious views and viewpoints—out of the welter of options available—should be given attention and/or support.

Church-related colleges and universities have yet other issues to confront and other opportunities to pursue. These schools have never ignored religion and they have, in fact, often addressed a host of important religious questions beyond the six that we have enumerated here. They have trained countless students in the study of the Bible, they have helped students grapple with theological quandaries, they have provided students with heartfelt worship experiences, and they have encouraged students to express their faith through concrete acts of witness and service to others.

No one doubts that church-related institutions, Baptist campuses included, will (and should) continue to pursue those special and particular activities that can exist only at private Christian campuses. However, they also need to address the same six religious questions facing every other campus.

The students at church-related schools are living in the same world as everyone else, a world of religious complexity and global inter-connectedness. Students at church-related colleges and universities, just like students at all other institutions of higher learning, need to know something about the world’s other historic religions, they need to practice how to participate graciously and intelligently in public debates about faith and values, and they need space and opportunity to explore their own spirituality.

Baptist colleges and universities may have a special role to play in this new world of higher education where religion is no longer invisible.

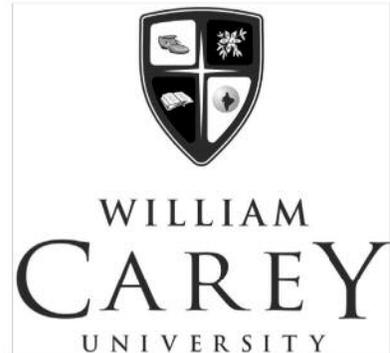
From the beginning of the Baptist movement, Baptist Christians have understood that human knowledge and understanding is fallible. The Englishman John Smyth is often cited as the first person to clearly formulate Baptist distinctives. During the last year of his life, while in Holland in the early seventeenth century, he wrote:

I am not of the number of those men, which assume unto themselves such plenary knowledge and assurance of their ways, and of the perfection and sufficiency thereof, as that they peremptorily censure all men except those of their own understanding . . . I profess my

We are entering a new stage of higher education in America (and perhaps around the world) in which religion will be a much more common subject of conversation than in the recent past. In that conversation, Baptist colleges and universities will, like John Smyth, have much to learn, but they also have much to contribute.

readiness to be taught by others . . . I profess I have changed, and shall be ready still to change, for the better. (John Smyth, 1612)

Smyth understood that all human knowledge is fallible, including his own, and he professed his willingness to be taught by others and to change his views if such change was for the better. We are entering a new stage of higher education in America (and perhaps around the world) in which religion will be a much more common subject of conversation than in the recent past. In that conversation, Baptist colleges and universities will, like John Smyth, have much to learn, but they also have much to contribute. ■



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Amazing Grace: A Long Journey Toward Diversity

William H. Crouch, Jr.
President, Georgetown College
Georgetown, Kentucky

Editor's Note: Dr. William Crouch made this presentation to attendees of the the annual meeting of the International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities June 5, 2012, Little Rock, Arkansas

My journey to today's conference began in the deep south of this country in the 1950's, when as a boy I questioned the need for four restrooms and two water fountains in public places. It continued as I grew in academic and spiritual maturity, struggling with social justice issues for people all created equal. The weight of the journey increased when in 1991 I became the president of a predominantly-white liberal arts college and knew I was in a position to no longer feel disdain for the racial challenges in our country but to do something about them. Adding to this desire to affect social injustice was my expending educational philosophy, which led me to believe that learning to appreciate, respect and live with people of other cultures would be necessary in our quickly developing global society. The salient question for me became "how do I, as a white college President of a predominantly-white college in Kentucky, make any kind of a difference?" I decided to focus on one culture at first, the African American culture. I was convinced that doing right by African Americans is also good for business, whether you mean that educationally, economically or in some other way.

I started in a small, simple way by inviting any of our few African American undergraduate students to pursue their Doctorate degrees, promising that the college would cover the cost if they would return to their alma mater to teach for five years after completion. One student in ten years took the offer. My next step was to find some partners that reflected a more diverse culture and when identified with Georgetown College would demonstrate our active, passionate seeking of diversity. This led to the recruitment of the NFL's Cincinnati Bengals to locate their summer training camp on our campus. With a large number of these professional athletes representing diverse backgrounds, more and more African Americans began visiting our campus in the summers.

Try as hard as we could, we were not able to recruit a full-time, tenure-track Black professor to our faculty. Frustrated, I began to realize that the problem, contrary to what I had previously thought, was not money. Rather, I was to learn that it was an issue of inclusion within our community. Questions began to emerge: Where does a black man get his hair cut in Georgetown? Do your grocery stores sell four kinds of greens? I was stunned to realize that our community must become more inclusive if Georgetown College was to take the next step in diversity. It was at this point that I realized that I had a lot of listening to do. Diversity was not going to happen unless I went deep in my personal understanding of the Black culture of America.

I thought I knew what diversity was, but I was soon to learn I was wrong. A compelling book, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting*

Together In the Cafeteria, opened my eyes. Four hundred years of tragic history impacts a culture far more deeply than I could ever have imagined. Diversity is not about handshakes and smiles. It is about understanding scars. It is about words, dance, colors, and symbols. Ultimately, it is about the heart.

This understanding was made even clearer when Georgetown College landed a grant in 2000 to establish the National Student Research Center for the Underground Railroad. I encouraged the Director of our program—that same student who in my first year as President took my offer to get her PhD and return to our faculty—to develop partnership with historically black colleges so they could send their students to our college to do research on this extremely important historical phenomenon. In short order, 13 HBCs signed agreements to use our center over the next five years. I was thrilled, but in the past 5 years not a single student from these schools has come to our campus. I was even more surprised to discover that our own Black students did not go to the center, but that almost all the research was being done by white students.

This was wake-up time for me. I had to learn more.

I began asking, "Are you Black or African American?" What is soul food? Scared and totally humbled we were about to begin a journey we knew nothing about.

Much work had to be done:

- **We had to be educated**—Dr. William Parker entered my life—80 years old, Black, retired professor of sociology. He agreed to mentor me for 4 years with the purpose of helping me learn Black culture. I wish I had

time to tell you this journey from visiting in the home of Black families to becoming a member of Black Expression Book Club.

- **We had to be networked within the African American culture**—enter Dr. Joel Gregory, a white preacher man, who had been blackballed from the White churches of America and taken in by the Black church. Almost every Sunday for 8 years he had preached across America to Black congregations. In 2002 he spoke at the college's Pastor's Conference. I did not know his full story until I heard him speak. I asked if I could take him to the airport. That day I hired him to build my Black network.

- **We needed to understand changing demographics in America**—so I hired a research consultant to keep me up-to-date on these changes. This is the last year for white students in America's high schools to be the majority.

- **We needed money** and I met a wealthy African American business man who listened to my call and gave me \$20,000 to start the journey,

- **We needed an encourager**—someone I could open up to, someone who would accept my cries of frustration, someone who could pray with me, hold my hands up at times, edit my speeches, look me in the eye and tell me the truth—enter John I. Durham, a former graduate school professor.

- **And, we needed a miracle**—enter Bishop College, a bankrupt, HBCU in Dallas, Texas with 7,000 living alumni and no place to call home.

For the last ten years, we have invested tremendous time and energy in this endeavor. I had no idea of the scars that have come from 400 years of a tragic history. I have learned

"For the last ten years, we have invested tremendous time and energy in this endeavor. I had no idea of the scars that have come from 400 years of a tragic history."

that diversity is about:

- the power of touch
- the respect of elders
- the joy of free expression
- the meaning of color
- understanding why the black kids do sit together in the cafeteria
- the importance of symbols
- the joy of dance
- the heavenly joy of soul food
- realizing that all Barbie dolls are not made white
- appreciating the significance of pictures on a wall

I have visited the prisons; talked with pastors about the plight of the young black males in their neighborhoods and have seen the tears of a mother whose children have been killed because of a misplaced bullet from a passing car. I now know that diversity cannot be learned from a video but must be lived and experienced. Because of the remarkable insights I have gained of the African American outlook on life and the rhythm by which they embrace the joys of life, I am a richer person.

Our journey has been remarkable, and has resulted in the following initiatives:

- We founded the First Tee Scholars program, which provides full scholarship to minority students who have been involved in the First Tee program in high school. Tim Finchem, Commissioner of the PGA Tour, established this program to introduce young people to the game of golf and to teach them nine life skills that could influence their lives forever. Today 600 students at 30 colleges across America are getting college scholarship due to Georgetown College's pioneering of this program. The first two students, both African American, graduated from Georgetown

College and now work in the golf industry.

- We have established a partnership with this country's four national Black Baptist Conventions (representing 7.6 million African Americans across America). Each of the conventions has the opportunity to nominate a representative to join Georgetown College's Board of Trustees. The college has also committed to provide one full scholarship to a Black scholar from each of the conventions.

- We have "honored" the alumni of Bishop College of Dallas, Texas, a historically Black College that went bankrupt in 1986. Beginning in November 2008, Bishop College alumni will be celebrating their homecomings once again, this time on the campus of Georgetown College. This might be the first time in American history that a predominantly-white college has adopted the alumni of a historically black college. This partnership has resulted in legacy scholarships for the descendants of Bishop College alumni, a new facility bearing the Bishop College name, and many other recognition programs. Eight students have now graduated, 14 more are current students and many more on the way.

- We have launched a model program with two African American congregations to establish "pull through" scholarships for 5th, 6th and 7th grade boys. These will be full scholarships to Georgetown College if these boys pull through high school as academic achievers. We will seek out partner companies, each of which will choose one of these "economic inclusion scholars" as a college freshman, mentor that student through an internship and "shadowing" for four years, then have the opportunity to hire that same student after graduation.

- We have created a Step Team, possibly the first such team on

(Continued on page 12)



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Amazing Grace...

(Continued from page 11)

a white campus in America. These young people use discipline, rhythm and precision to celebrate their culture. Steppers are a vital part of the Black tradition of America.

- We have committed ourselves to sponsoring many African American events across the country, including a joint venture with the Cincinnati Bengals to offer a summer Black Youth camp for 1000 young people under the auspices of the General Association of Baptists in Kentucky.

- We have established a partnership with E. K. Bailey Ministries in Dallas, Texas, a remarkable organization seeking to change the lives of African Americans all over America. I now serve on their board of directors.

- We have begun a continuing education program with Dr. Joel Gregory, known as Proclaimer's Place that has allowed over 300 Black pastors to study for a week in Oxford, England.

Today, I lead an institution that has seen a significant increase in applications from African American students. In the President's office there are pictures of people of all colors, not just whites. We have just successfully recruited our first full-time, tenured Black professor. As President, I am receiving invitations from all over the country to speak to Black groups such as the Granville Academy for Young Black Entrepreneurs. In addition, perhaps most importantly, there is a new richness of thought and experience on our campus that will influence our place forever.

So, what has this white college President learned up to this point on his journey? Among many lessons, here are a few that

pertain to this symposium:

1. The President must be committed to a deep understanding of diversity and reflect that knowledge symbolically in his official actions.

2. The President needs cultural advisors who will be honest and direct.

3. The campus needs to reflect an understanding of diversity, but genuinely, not in a public relations "selling" sort of way (for example by using pictures in brochures that depict a diversity not consistent with the institution).

4. The faculty has to embrace the "richness" of the diversity experience as adding to the educational outcomes of the institution.

5. The college needs to communicate directly with the diverse community in ways that connect that community. For example, recently I met with our African American employees as a group to discuss important issues and to hear their perspective.

6. God does use the most unlikely people and place to demonstrate his power.

7. Transformational change takes many years and is very hard.

In 1787, when Georgetown College was founded, Elijah Craig gave this mission challenge to his new school: "Our task is to prepare students to go into the frontier!" The mission has not changed. The frontier has. It is no longer the promise of gold on the west coast, but the richness that comes from understanding individuals who are different from us and learning to embrace that difference as one of the gifts of God.

In 2009 at our annual Pastor's Conference, the Reverend Melvin Von Wade went to the podium to preach after we had sung the white version of "Love Lifted Me." He began by saying, "now for all you white preachers here let me sing "Love Lifted Me" as it would be sung in the Black church of America. As you might expect, it was full of a new rhythm and volume. We all smiled and even began to clap.

"Now," he said, "let me sing it like the slaves sang it. Imagine being in the hot sun for 8 hours picking cotton in 100 degree weather in South Georgia. Imagine tired, hot and sweaty, carrying on your back your sack of cotton to have it weighed at the end of the day. Imagine as it is being weighed noticing your owner lifting it with his hand so the scales show it to be lighter than your days quota. Imagine the owner yelling at you for not being productive enough and telling you to rip off your shirt and to grab the metal rings hanging from the barns rafters. Imagine the whip ripping into your flesh—not once, but 27 times and the owner telling you, you had better be productive the next day. Imagine just having enough strength to stumble to your barracks and as you enter you collapse and begin to sing 'Love Lifted Me.'"

With tears in his eyes and buckling knees he finished singing...

The room of preachers was quiet – and just for a moment—at a predominantly white college, with a white President in one of the whitest part of America—God gave sight to the blind. It was a moment of Amazing Grace! ■



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Baptist College and University Scholars Present Essays in Little Rock

Created in 2008, the Baptist College and University Scholar's Program (BCU) at Baylor University works closely with the International Association of Baptist Colleges and Schools and Baptist colleges and universities to identify and support potential students for doctoral study. The aim is to create a partnership with their undergraduate institutions and retain potential faculty in Baptist colleges and universities.

This year, at the IABCU annual meeting in Little Rock, four of the BCU Scholars (pictured at right) presented their reflections on Integrating Christian Faith with Scholarship and Teaching. Scott Ryan is a graduate from Gardner-Webb University. He earned his Master of Divinity and Master of Theology degrees from Duke Divinity School and is currently a doctoral candidate in Baylor's Religion Department.

Jessi Hampton graduated from East Texas Baptist University and is now pursuing a Master of Fine Arts in Directing at Baylor University.

Michelle Del'Homme, a graduate of the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, is a doctoral candidate in Baylor's

Chemistry Department.

Nick Pruitt, a Wayland Baptist graduate who received his Masters in Church-State Studies from Baylor, is currently a doctoral candidate in Baylor's Religion Department.

Students had an opportunity to interact with the provosts of their nominating colleges and universities and meet leaders from the colleges and universities who hope to employ them as members. Baylor plans to bring additional BCU scholars to present at next year's meeting at California Baptist University.



In picture at right, Baptist College and University Scholars are from left: Scott Ryan, Gardner-Webb University, Jessi Hampton, East Texas Baptist University, Michelle Del'Homme, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, and Nick Pruitt, Wayland Baptist University.

The following six new scholars have been chosen for the 2012-2013 academic year: B. J. Parker, Mercer University; Clary Aaron, Mercer University; Courtney Parker, Mercer University; Jennifer Gober, Howard Payne University; Stephanie Peek, Southwest Baptist University; and Grant Francis, Samford University.

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Social Media Morass?



After a student at your school drowns in a beach accident, one of your faculty posts on her Facebook page: "After today, I am thinking the beach sounds like a wonderful idea for my English 101 class! I HATE THEIR GUTS! They are the devils spawn!" Is this a firing offense?

A student in your mortuary science program posts statements on Facebook which he describes as "satirical commentary and violent fantasy about his school experience." Among his posts are: "Who knew embalming lab was so cathartic! I still want to stab a certain someone in the throat with an embalming needle though. Hmm ... perhaps I will spend the evening updating my 'Death List # 5' and making friends with the crematory guy." Can the school discipline the student by giving him an F in the anatomy lab?

Social media may be the most over-worked couple of words in the recent history of the English language (over 114 million hits on Google in 0.35 seconds). But while the use of social media has become like breathing to most of your students, the legal battles revolving around social media are just heating up.

Most colleges and universities are interested in social media primarily for recruitment and program promotion. I will leave the discussion of those uses to others. My focus is on the ability of the institution to respond to the inappropriate use of social media by students or employees.

What should be considered in a social media policy for employees? Some cases address the constitutional rights of employees to free speech on the Internet when not at work. However, restrictions imposed by private institutions are not governmental restrictions on speech and do not violate the First Amendment.

Most Baptist schools have the right to

insist that employees conduct themselves in a manner which is consistent with the institution's religious values, both on and off the job.

A posting by an employee which reflects badly on the institution or indicates that the employee does not share the institution's religious values can be grounds for disciplinary action.

However, the institution's expectations for off-the-job conduct should be clearly stated.

A policy applicable to students should also clearly state the institution's expectations and whether the policy applies to students away from school (during summer break, for example). The policy may prohibit students from

posting materials which violate the institution's policy on illegal discrimination or depict violations of the institution's code of conduct. Examples are posts which constitute sexual harassment or promote the use of illegal drugs.

A good policy should help students understand the potential long-term consequences of posting material which may haunt them when applying for grad schools or employment.

The institution may have to do a little soul-searching to determine just how closely to monitor students' online behavior and what types of conduct will be punished.

College is a time when students are exploring new freedoms and establishing their own boundaries. Administrators and trustees may apply standards very different from those of students and their peers

when deciding what remarks are profane or too sexually suggestive. There are potential land mines if the school's enforcement of its policy is so inconsistent that it is arbitrary or creates a disparate impact on minority students.

The two 'hypotheticals' at the beginning of this article are almost verbatim excerpts from recent cases. In the first case, a New York court found the school's firing of its faculty member "so disproportionate to her offense as to shock one's

The institution must give careful attention to the crafting, monitoring, and enforcement of a social media policy if it wants the right to discipline employees or students for inappropriate online behavior.

sense of fairness" and reinstated the teacher. However, the Minnesota Supreme Court upheld the school's punishment of its mortuary science student because the student violated "academic program rules [which] were

narrowly tailored and directly related to established professional conduct standards."

The institution must give careful attention to the crafting, monitoring, and enforcement of a social media policy if it wants the right to discipline employees or students for inappropriate online behavior.

Administration and legal counsel should work together to create a policy which meets the institution's needs and provides an appropriate process for addressing violations.

James D. Jordan is a partner in the law firm of Guenther, Jordan & Price, 1150 Vanderbilt Plaza, 2100 West End Avenue, Nashville, TN 37203, e-mail: <JPGuenther@GJPLaw.com>, phone: 615-329-2100, fax: 615-329-2187. ■

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McMillin Named President of Blue Mountain College

North Mississippi native Barbara Childers McMillin became the eighth president of Blue Mountain College on August 1.

McMillin succeeds Bettye Rogers Coward, who retired June 30 after 11 years as BMC president.

McMillin, who grew up 15 miles north of Blue Mountain in Falkner, was the Associate Provost and Dean of Instruction at Union University in Jackson, Tenn., where she was a member of the faculty for the past 20 years.

McMillin, 52, is an alumna of Northeast Mississippi Community College, Union University and the University of Mississippi.

"How deeply honored I am to accept the privilege and responsibility of serving as the eighth president of Blue Mountain College," she



Barbara McMillin

said. "That God would call me and my family to this place of service is both humbling and exciting; I know that He has a magnificent plan for our future together."

After earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Union, McMillin earned both her M.A. and D.A. in English at Ole Miss. As a graduate student, she was a teaching assistant at Ole Miss and an English Instructor at BMC in the summers of 1985 and 1987.

McMillin was a member of the NEMCC English faculty for five years before joining the Union faculty.

A lifelong Southern Baptist, McMillin and her husband, Larry, have a son, Sam, who will be an eighth-grader in the fall. ■

HLGU Trustees Name Anthony Allen 17th President

Hannibal-LaGrange University (HLGU) board of trustees announced May 4 the unanimous selection of Anthony W. Allen, 43, as the 17th president of the school.

Allen, was senior vice president for adminis-

tration at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, and the institution's chief administrative officer.

Trustees at the University, began their search for a new president last November when Woodrow Burt, HLGU's president since 1995, announced plans to retire this summer.

A North Carolina native, he played football four years at Duke University where he was a defensive tackle and graduated with a degree in history and religion. He earned both the Master of Divinity with language degree and the Master of Theology, ethics degree at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. Allen earned the Ed.D from North Carolina State University.

Married to Stacy Coyle, also a North Carolina native, they have five children: Bethany, 14; Evan, 13; Leighton, 10; Annaliese, 5; and Brinley, 2. ■



Anthony Allen

Understanding Online Learners: Who Is Studying Online, and Why?

Special from The Learning House, Inc.
Distance learning is not a new concept in higher education; even before computers and the Internet, institutions offered correspondence courses through the U.S. Mail. But only recently has technology become widespread enough to make online learning a practical part of a college's or university's offerings.

Online learning offers many benefits for both students and institutions. For students, online courses offer more convenience and flexibility than a traditional classroom. Many of today's students juggle multiple demands of their job and family, so online courses fit their schedule better. For institutions, online learning allows access to more students, costs less and keeps institutions on the cutting edge.

For institutions to best serve their students and make the most of technology, they need to know who is taking online courses, and why. The Learning House, Inc., in conjunction with Aslanian Market Research, recently released "Online College Students 2012: Comprehensive Data on Demands and Preferences." Learning House and Aslanian surveyed 1,500 individuals nationwide who were at least 18 years of age and were recently enrolled, currently enrolled or planned to enroll in a fully online undergraduate or graduate degree, certificate or licensure program. The results revealed the demographics of online students and what they studied, allowing educational institutions to more effectively meet the demands of this growing population.

Many people believe that online students are older, but the survey found that 40 percent of online students are younger than the age of 30; and about one out of every five online students is under the age of 25. That number is expected only to grow, as more secondary schools offer online courses and traditional college-age students become familiar with taking courses online.

The study found that seventy percent of respondents were women, and 63 percent of respondents were not the first in their family to attend college.

Sixty percent of online respondents were employed full time. The flexibility of online learning and the typically shorter length of online courses add to the appeal for busy students. Those who enroll in online programs generally feel comfortable in the online world. Ninety percent of those surveyed had a profile on a social media site, with 83 percent having a Facebook account. Seventy-five percent of those with a profile on a social media site checked that site daily. Institutions can use a thoughtful social media strategy to recruit students or maintain contact with currently enrolled students.

Students who choose to study online typically do so because they believe obtaining a degree or certificate will improve their job prospects. One-third of online students today continue learning because they desire a promotion or an increase in their salaries.

Sixty-eight percent of respondents cited the "ability to balance work, family and school

responsibilities" as a reason to attend an online program, while 64 percent cited the "ability to study anytime and anywhere."

One-third of online students study business, particularly the fields of business administration and management. Business is the most popular area of study at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The social sciences and health professions rank next at the undergraduate level. However, education ranks as the next most popular at the graduate level.

The science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines continue to gain traction at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

About 80 percent of online students live within 100 miles of a campus or service center of the institution they attend, and the large majority live within 50 miles, so offering programs relevant to the local area will help institutions serve their student population.

Certificates attract 20 percent of the market. While it can seem as if for-profit institutions get all the attention (both positive and negative), two-thirds of online students attend not-for-profit institutions.

When choosing an online program, proximity, cost and opportunity all significantly affected why students chose the schools they did.

To read the full report, visit <http://www.learninghouse.com/resources/whitepapers/research-study>. ■