

**Final Report
to the
Mount Vernon Nazarene University
Board of Trustees**

**E. LeBron Fairbanks, President
November 2, 2006**

I shared with the MVNU faculty and staff two months ago a verse of scripture that has been a source of comfort to me this year: "It is God who changes the seasons," Daniel 2:21. It is God who changes the seasons for:

Anne and me;
MVNU faculty and staff; and
the Board of Trustees.

The passage is comforting to each of us particularly during this presidential transition year on campus.

I relate to the words of Dr. Maxine Walker, Point Loma Nazarene University professor. In a recent email to me regarding her upcoming retirement, Maxine stated, "transition issues: with lots of woes, worries and wonders." Yes, indeed!

REFLECTIONS

Permit me to reflect for a few moments on the years since 1989 when I was elected MVNU's fifth president. In my most recent article for "In Focus," our internal communication newsletter, I shared with the faculty and staff some thoughts about change at MVNU.

Some things have changed. For instance: Enrollment to 2,670 (+150%). Operating budget to \$43 million (+300%). New and expanded academic programs for undergraduate and graduate students taught in traditional and non-traditional formats. University transition. Discipline-specific national accreditation. Midwest regional academic recognition. New academic and residence life facilities. Satellite campuses. Campus Ministries division. Cultural diversity initiatives. Property expansion from 279 to 405 acres. MVNU endowment expanded to \$12.6 million (+400%). Cumulative Current (or emergency) Fund increased to \$2.7 million (+153%). Debt burden ratio reduced to 2.1%. Foundation Board created to manage Endowment and University funds. Strategic plans and leadership agendas to guide the university through the decade.

But some things have not changed. Throughout my tenure at MVNU, we have challenged students to:

1. Believe God can use them in the world for the cause of Christ, regardless of their academic majors;
2. View themselves as global Christians with a world mission;
3. Embrace the theological tradition of the Church of the Nazarene and the lifestyle guidelines of the denomination and MVNU; and
4. Live their lives as holy men or women of God, following graduation, regardless of where their vocation takes them.

Yes, many things have changed and continue to change at this Christian university. However, some things do not change, and will not. The four challenges mentioned above are as relevant today as they have been in the past.

I have pondered deeply about leadership during the past twenty-seven plus years in higher education administration. According to John R.W. Stott, “Christian leadership ... appears to break down into five main ingredients - clear vision, hard work, dogged perseverance, humble service and iron discipline.” I trust you have consistently seen these characteristics in me as I have attempted to lead Christianly this academic community of faith.

Long ago I concluded that three driving forces must characterize me if I am, indeed, to lead with a servant heart:

- a vision of who we are as the people of God;
- a passion for what we are called to do in the work of God; and
- an obsession for how we are to live together as a family of God.

Early in my tenure at MVNU, I identified four priorities to which I should give at least 80% of my time: The priorities are:

1. Spiritual leadership to the campus community - staff, faculty, senior administrators and students;
2. University-wide strategic thinking, planning and leading;
3. Christian leadership development - locally, regionally and worldwide; and
4. Major donor cultivation/gifting and endowment development.

In the context of leading this university within the parameters identified above, I have continued to ponder the answers to three questions that prod me as a servant leader. I have pursued these questions since my beginning days in 1978 as academic dean of the European Nazarene College:

1. How can we live together as Christians in a diverse faith community so that our relationships are redemptive and a witness to unbelievers of the reconciling work of God in Christ?
2. If “in Christ, all things are made new,” then how does our relationship with Christ inform and transform the way we lead a Christian community?
3. In conflicting situations, within the community of believers when seemingly irreconcilable expectations are placed on the leader from multiple constituency groups, how does one lead in these situations, really lead, with “the mind of Christ?”

These questions frame the issues I seek to discuss in a book I am writing on the servant leader. My MVNU tenure has provided opportunity upon opportunity to “lead from my knees” as my Christian faith has increasingly formed and shaped the way I lead.

I think often of the words of Council of Independent College (CIC) president, Dr. Richard Eckman, who stated at one of the CIC annual meetings, “... to succeed, small colleges must have good leadership, clarity about vision and mission, and skills in the basics.” I wish I could begin again at MVNU with the knowledge, clarity and skills I have acquired since 1989!

Much attention at the Cabinet level has been given to strategy development. I embrace the words of John Maxwell: “Strong leaders discern the situation and then determine their strategy.” MVNU continues to mature as a Christian university because of the attention given to vision, mission, strategy, tactics and

implementation. Tenacity has characterized the work of both Board and Cabinet as we pursued together our Decadal Agendas.

“The dog barks, but the caravan moves on,” states an old Arab proverb. And these words also reflect the steady approach the MVNU Board and administration have taken regarding the responsibilities given to us. Together, we have just “moved on,” not in a knee-jerk fashion, but in a steady, faithful, collaborative and missional manner.

APPRECIATION

Of the 43 members on the MVNU Board of Trustees in 1989, only four remain on the 2006 Board. Dr. Ralph Hodges, was a founding Board member, Drs. Wendell Kizzee and Margaret Bailey were elected in 1980 and Dr. Glenn Thorne in 1984. Trustee Emeriti, Dr. George Jetter, founding Board member, and Dr. James Couchenour, elected in 1971 and former Board chair, are with us today at my request for this report.

The 1989 Board of Trustees knew little about me, personally. I was serving in Manila, the Philippines. No application, no interviews. I was not an MVNU alumnus, nor from this region. I remain amazed and grateful for the confidence placed in me by the 1989 Board. I have attempted, with God’s grace, strength and wisdom, to lead MVNU hand-in-hand with the Board. For example, the decision of the Board to enthusiastically accept in 2002 the recommendation of the Blue Ribbon Commission to move MVNC to University standing was huge and strategic.

I remember the Board asking me to provide tenure as the college president. They wanted me to become the longest-serving MVNU president. And that I have. Gratefully. Very gratefully.

I have witnessed significant changes in board membership. All regional district superintendents have changed. Dr. David Wilson is the third Board chair with whom I have worked. The Board, Board leadership and the MVNU president have grown together in our assignments. The focus on Board development since 1998 has been particularly rewarding. The Board Development Committee and the Board Standing Policies Manual resulted from the Board’s attention to its own development.

Thanks, Dr. Wilson, for your kindness to Anne and me over the years, but especially during the past few months. You have worked with me during some of the most stressful, and painful, months of my tenure at MVNU. I thank you for your understanding, encouragement and insightfulness.

My gratitude is also extended to the MVNU employees. The university currently has 349 full-time faculty and staff, of which 311 (or 89%) have been hired since 1989!

I remember so well the year-long process we went through in 2001-02 as the faculty and staff worked with me to revise MVNU’s vision statement. We met as faculty and staff in focus groups and corresponded throughout the school year via email. What emerged was a vision statement every faculty and staff member embraced and continues to affirm:

Mount Vernon Nazarene University:
An academic community of faith
shaping Christ-like leaders
for life-long service and global impact.

The faculty has worked methodically since the early 1990's to conceptualize and develop the non-traditional undergraduate and graduate academic programs for working adults. Honest differences remain among faculty members regarding how some view the concept of degree completion programs offered in non-traditional formats. To their credit, however, when votes have been taken in faculty meetings, the will of the majority was embraced and together we moved forward, continuing to develop new programs.

I remember working with the faculty to develop curriculum majors for the traditional undergraduate academic program in Social Work, Educational Ministries, Graphic Design, Criminal Justice and, more recently, Nursing. Graduate programs have been developed in Ministry, Education, Health Care Administration, and Business.

It was my joy to participate actively in the conceptualization of new, relocated or expanded facilities for the Teacher Education Department, School of Theology and Philosophy, Academic Support, Adult and Graduate Studies, Counseling and Career Center, and the Social Work Department. Numerous classrooms have been added with the construction of the Visual Arts Building and the Jennie K. Moore Family and Consumer Sciences Building. The Esther Jetter Preschool is an outstanding facility for young children and for education majors wanting K-3rd grade teacher certification. The Hyson Campus Center was greatly expanded to house faculty, administrative offices and classrooms. The Cougar Den has been renovated (again) to include faculty offices in the lower level. The Thorne Library and Learning Resource Center is a magnificent structure and statement regarding MVNU's commitment to academic excellence.

I was privileged to lead the dedication activities for the R. R. Hodges Chapel/Auditorium and the Free Enterprise Business Center even though these phenomenal facilities were planned and construction began on these buildings during the administration of my esteemed predecessor, Dr. William Prince.

Eight MVNU satellite campuses (Cincinnati, Gahanna, Grove City, Lima, Shelby/Mansfield, Marion, Newark and Polaris), in addition to the Mount Vernon campus, now host various Adult and Graduate Studies (AGS) programs. The AGS enrollment this year of 1,321 is a testament to the need for these programs and to the reality and tenacity of the MVNU faculty and staff. I am firmly convinced that the AGS program greatly expands the MVNU impact and influence throughout our region and worldwide.

Anne and I enjoy immensely our relationship with students. We are energized by them. They challenge us and, at times, comfort us. They always remind us of why the university exists. Students keep us young ... most of the time!

The William and Evelyn Prince Student Union! What a magnificent facility, recognizing and honoring MVNU's fourth president and first lady! We continue to receive compliments on the beauty and functionality of the PSU. I look forward to celebrating with you when the long-awaited Event Center is dedicated and Phase II of the Prince Student Center is begun.

Redwood dormitory plus Cyprus, Birch, Spruce and Rosewood apartment complexes have been constructed since 1989. We have increased the capacity for students to live on campus from 786 beds in 1989 to 1,138 beds in 2006. At present, we are at 92% capacity on campus student housing.

Alumni at home and around the world make us "proud" of our MVNU connections. The university motto, "to seek to learn is to seek to serve" motivates every alumnus. Truly, for most students, the MVNU experience is life-changing. MVNU has granted 8,738 degrees since the first college Commencement. It has been my honor and privilege to sign the diplomas of 6,159 alumni, or 70% of the graduates since the founding of the school in 1968.

Daniel Webster stated, "If we work with marble, it will perish, if we work with brass, time will efface it; if we rear temples, they will crumble ... but if we work upon immortal minds and hearts, we are engraving upon that which will brighten all eternity." This is why all of us are so committed to Christian higher education!

I spend an enormous amount of time with the Cabinet. Weekly luncheons. Individual conferences with each Cabinet member every other week during the school year. Semester all-day planning sessions. Post-commencement and pre-fall semester planning weeks are staple to the senior administrative team.

Balance of perspective provides balance in decisions. I'm grateful to have Cabinet members who have served significant lengths of time at MVNU:

Dr. Randie Timpe	1975
Dr. Margie Bennett	1976
Mr. Rick Raymond	1990
Dr. Gary Sivewright	1991
Mrs. Peggy Oldham	1991
Rev. Keith Newman	2003
Dr. Steve McClellan	2 months!

What a team! Professional. Disciplined. Specialists. Devout Christians. Outstanding churchmen and women. Cabinet members will share in plenary session #2 some updates from the divisions they serve.

An old Polish proverb states, "A guest in the house is God in the house" (quoted in the book, *Kane and Abel* by Jeffrey Archer). I seek to relate to each Cabinet member as "guest in the house." I am blessed beyond measure by both the Cabinet members' friendship and by their dedication to the administrative assignments for which they are responsible. I am blessed. I am blessed.

LOOKING AHEAD

Several years ago, I outlined some golden anniversary goals for MVNU. In 2018 the university will celebrate her 50th anniversary year! I will share these golden anniversary goals with the new president, if appropriate.

I do believe, firmly, that by 2010, MVNU will be reaccredited for another ten years by the Higher Learning Commission. The Event Center on campus will also be completed by this date, and the enrollment will top 3,000.

As for Anne and me, we plan to spend a few months in Florida following the February 1, 2007 transition date for the new MVNU president. Anne has already developed a list of projects she intends to pursue. I want to complete a book I have been writing (and revising!) for several years. In addition, I chair a Missional Review team assessing the Church of the Nazarene International Board of Education and the Education Commissioner. The team report is due to the Board of General Superintendents by July 1, 2007. This project will absorb a significant amount of my time next spring.

Anne and I will travel to The Netherlands in late March where I will participate in International Course of Study Advisory Committee (ICOSAC) and International Board of Education (IBOE) meetings. We plan

to return to European Nazarene College for the fall semester 2007 to teach in EuNC's extension program throughout Europe.

The World Mission Division director and I are discussing an assignment for me in the World Mission Division. The focus of the assignment will be on regional leadership development. I really want to "pass on" to emerging Christian leaders what has been passed to me by so many of you and other mentors and colleagues at home and around the world.

CONCLUSION

I like the words of President Teddy Roosevelt who stated:

"It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong stumbles, or when the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man in the arena, whose face is marred by dirt and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly . . . who knows great enthusiasm, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who have never known neither victory nor defeat."

I want my epitaph to state that I was "a man in the arena," not in an isolated ivory tower pontificating about leading a faith community. I have striven "valiantly" to be a servant leader to this academic community of faith.

With intense emotion, deep resolve and firm conviction, I commit to you, again, to live with Christian integrity and lead with a servant's heart wherever God chooses to place Anne and me for the next season of our lives.

The "Servant's Song" (Hymnal #679) continues to pulsate within me as I bring to a close my ministry at MVNU:

Brother, sister, 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.

I will hold the Christ light for you,
In the night time of your fear,
I will hold my hand out to you,
Speak the peace you long to hear.
I will weep when you are weeping,
When you laugh I'll laugh with you,

I will share your joy and sorrow,
Till we've seen this journey through.

The words of the late Dag Hammarskjöld, former highly esteemed secretary general of the United Nations, are my parting words to you:

“For all that has been, thanks.
For all that will be, yes!”

With profound gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "E. LeBron Fairbanks". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "E".

E. LeBron Fairbanks