

**ENROLLMENT CAP, INSTITUTIONAL MISSION  
AND COLLABORATION**  
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Permit me to frame my remarks on “Mission and Collaboration” within the context of a discussion on campus and within the Board in the 1993-94 academic year. The topic was an “enrollment cap and institutional mission.” Please listen to some thoughts on the subject that I shared with the Board and campus community in the Spring 1994.

*During the past several months I have heard the question asked, "Do you plan to cap the enrollment at a certain number?" The question is usually asked in the context of financial discussions related to construction projects needed due to the enrollment growth surge MVNC is currently experiencing.*

*It is a fundamental question that demands an answer. It is a practical question, particularly with the financial constraints we face, that requires a decision. It is a deeply theological question that begs a response. Let me share with you my perspective on these questions.*

*I view Mount Vernon Nazarene College as the church at work in higher education. This statement is very important and the concept underlying the statement is critical.*

*The church is characterized by four dimensions--worship, an upward thrust; evangelism, an outward thrust; nurture, an inward thrust; and fellowship, a relational or circular thrust.*

*Mount Vernon Nazarene College, as a Christian college, seeking to be true to its identity, fulfills its unique function in providing rigorous academic programs for students that prepare them for careers and/or graduate studies, and promotes a distinctively Christian lifestyle and supportive environment in the context of a theological commitment to worship, evangelism, nurture, and fellowship. This is the reason MVNC, although fully accredited and justly proud of the status as a liberal arts and professions oriented college, must never view itself as a community college whose primary concern is academic preparation of the student. MVNC views the student much more holistically and challenges students to achieve their highest potential spiritually, socially, emotionally, physically, as well as, academically.*

*This holistic view of the student is driven by our understanding of MVNC as an academic institution, our belief in the unique creation by God of each individual, and our commitment to be the church at work in higher education.*

*As a fully-accredited academic institution, there are regulations and requirements placed on us from others and from ourselves. Some of these requirements relate to minimum admissions standards. If we are going to be a quality academic institution, in deed as well as in word, we must strive for academic excellence from students, as well as from faculty and staff, including the administration.*

*As a faithful Christian college which views itself as the church at work in higher education, we function in our assignments within the context of our identity as a worshipping, evangelizing, nurturing, and fellowshiping community of faith.*

*Now, back to the original question regarding an enrollment cap. In light of the above mentioned frame of reference in which we operate, capping the MVNC enrollment is like capping the attendance in a local church. Granted, in a local church as well as in a Christian college, there are restraints that limit us from doing all that we would like to do. However, this is radically different from saying that a "certain" number defines the optimal enrollment for whatever reasons--financial, comfort level, or desiring a certain "kind" of student. Because of our commitment to impacting the largest number of students possible as "the church at work in higher education," we will never be content with the "present" enrollment, even though constraints may limit the number of students enrolled.*

*And, by the way, MVNC will always (hopefully) have students enrolled who are not Christians in the same way that a local church, true to its mission, hopes to have unbelievers attending the services. Both the local congregation and the Christian college desire to impact non-Christians with the influence of the faith community and the claims of the gospel of Christ. It is certainly true that, as a Christian community of faith, MVNC seeks to communicate and nurture the life of faith in the context of a liberal arts and professions oriented educational setting. It is equally true that MVNC, as the church at work in higher education, should expect--even desire--to see an increasing number of unbelievers enrolled. The Christian alternative to the unbelievers lifestyle can take place through example, testimony, attitudes, chapel, classrooms, and informal discussions.*

*Our task at MVNC is not only to communicate the faith; our responsibility includes nurturing the life of faith in every student regardless of where he/she is on his/her spiritual journey. It is because of this frame of reference that:*

- a) Courses are taught from a Christian perspective;*
- b) Bible studies and covenant groups are formed for small groups to explore the Bible and to provide accountability;*
- c) Contemporary issues are addressed in the classrooms and various forums from a Christian point of view; and*
- d) Chapel services each week are designed to inspire students to worship and nurture them in their Christian faith.*

*We must never forget why we exist as a Christian community—to communicate and nurture the life of faith in the context of a higher education institution.*

*Why do we have a commitment to grow in the enrollment of the College? Not for numbers or for status. Acknowledging the potential discomfort and even fear caused by the uncertainties brought on by growth, we will never be content with where we are numerically because the potential is unlimited for impacting an ever larger group of students for Christ, modeling before them the Christian life and grounding them in the Christian faith.*

*Believe me, I think I understand at least some of the implications for the Board of Trustees in what I have stated. The Cabinet has just emerged from another lengthy and rather painful budget proposal building process. Realities and constraints hinder us from doing all we desire and need to do on this campus. But we will never retreat*

*to a "comfort zone" where we are free from stretching, experiencing pain, and taking risks.*

Fast-forward this discussion to August 2000 at MVNC. Enrollment in the school year 1993, when the above article was written, totaled 1,223. Enrollment this fall is expected to top 2,000. During the spring Board of Trustees meeting this year, I shared some "next steps" I believe we should take as we collectively envision moving MVNC to a new level of institutional life and influence. The twelve "next steps" identified below were approved by the Board and referred to appropriate committees, commissions, and task forces for implementation recommendations.

1. Strengthen MVNC's vision statement to include a renewed institutional commitment to academic excellence, faith development, Christian leadership, and lifelong service to God and humankind.
2. Modify the administrative and organizational structures to increase opportunities for faculty/staff members to provide input on issues involving them, and to participate in appropriate decision-making.
3. Set enrollment, academic program, and physical expansion goals for the next twenty years and revise our master campus development plan accordingly and in consideration of the recently acquired Pinecrest Farm.
4. Consider moving MVNC to university status, strengthen and add new graduate programs, including a doctoral program in a mission-specific area.
5. Expand academic programs and locations off-campus to provide more working adults in Central Ohio with the opportunity for a quality Christian college degree, and for increasing MVNC's influence, example, and witness.

6. Develop the Steenbergen Center for Global Mission and Ministry Studies to be located in the Upham house to provide training for short-term and long-term mission and ministry involvement worldwide and host various global mission and ministry related consultations. Particular attention will focus on compassionate ministries.
7. Create a church leadership training institute to resource lay and clergy leadership at home and abroad, network with other agencies to develop church leadership worldwide and intensify our training of students for church leadership. MVNC can be a denominational leader in continuing education for ministry and church leadership training worldwide.
8. Enlarge MVNC's endowment vision to include faculty positions, academic programs, research projects, and facility maintenance, as well as a dramatic increase in scholarship endowment, especially for ministerial students.
9. Broaden campus involvement in the three-year collaborative initiative so that MVNC is the model for how institutional collaboration can function as institutional strategy.
10. Develop a program of recognition for MVNC faculty members who sense God's call upon their lives to serve Him full-time as teachers at a Christian college.
11. Expand MVNC's influence in other holiness denominations and evangelical churches regionally, nationally, and internationally.

12. Strengthen the Board of Trustees by significantly revising the Board's organizational and governance structure, policies, and procedures.

To attempt to move to these new levels using processes and structures of the past, as effective as they may have been at the time, could be compared to the biblical analogy of pouring new wine into old wineskins.

What must change? Not our institutional mission! But, new approaches to embrace, reflect, articulate, and model the mission. I believe that institutional collaboration, viewed as institutional strategy, stems from and builds upon a theology of the priesthood of all believers, and offers to us a means by which our structures and processes are brought more into conformity with our theological foundations.

Viewed from a practical perspective, I believe that strategic collaboration will “separate” and facilitate higher education institutions like MVNC for continued growth, maturity, and excellence as these schools moved into the new decade. Phenomenal advances in technology make possible enhanced communication within and between institutions. Strategic Initiative #9 in the 1999-2009 strategic agenda, *A Commitment to Excellence*, identifies ways and means to creatively and strategically collaborate within and among institutions regarding mutually beneficial academic and administrative partnerships. The Collaborative Task Force is focused on developing a “collaboration culture” among MVNC faculty and staff. Some outstanding examples of intra-institutional collaboration encourage others across campus to participate in mutually beneficial cross-divisional projects. I am especially interested in the collaborative effort to develop freshmen assimilation and senior capstone courses. This

initiative will be viewed by many on campus as a “test case” to see if faculty, staff, and administration can work together, not only with “new wine,” but with “new wineskins.”

There will be no quick or easy answers. But, I promise to stand shoulder to shoulder with the members of the MVNC campus community who are wanting to think “outside of the box” and explore alternative ways to collaboratively work and strategically think about the mission of Mount Vernon Nazarene College.