

**“One Final Recommendation”**  
**Faculty Institute**  
**(My final address to faculty)**  
**Mount Vernon Nazarene University**  
**Dr. E. LeBron Fairbanks**  
**August 30, 2006**

On April 16, 2006, members of the MVNU family gathered to celebrate the life and memory of Dr. Stephen Nease, the founding president of MVNU. In 1966, just months after his election as president of Zone A Nazarene College, he wrote to his mother from Columbus, Ohio, where he and his family were living until a site for the new school was selected. He stated to his mother: “We are having the time of our lives... convinced that we enjoy one of the rare opportunities ever found in the church.”

Today, approximately 38 years after the first group of 192 students arrived for classes in 1968 at the new Mount Vernon Nazarene College, the university now enrolls over 2,500 students, has a beautiful 406-acre main campus in Mount Vernon and satellite campuses throughout the state of Ohio.

Among the many enduring influences of Dr. Nease, none is more noteworthy than his commitment to view education as preparation for service. He coined the phrase that became the motto of MVNU – *to seek to learn is to seek to serve*. Truly a life changing idea!

My first encounter with the MVNU faculty whose lives so permeated the college motto was in Manila, Philippines. The year was 1986. The faculty member was Professor James Skon and his family. They impacted me greatly. Two MVNU computer science students accepted my invitation (with Prof. Skon’s encouragement) to spend the summer of 1987 serving with us at the Asia Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary (APNTS) in Manila to establish a computer network throughout campus, connecting and programming the computers recently purchased for the campus. One of the students returned to APNTS for the entire academic year of 1988 to complete the work he and his student colleague began. I watched lived out the motto of MVNU lived out in the lives of this professor and his family and students!

Anne, Stephen, and I were serving at APNTS when I was contacted in 1989 by MVNC Board Chair Dr. Harold Graves. He informed me of my election as president of Mount Vernon Nazarene College. Though I was surprised and very hesitant, Dr. Graves asked me to pray about the invitation. Three days later I accepted the election.

The day following my acceptance, I received a telephone call from the MVNC Director of Communications who asked for a telephone interview. I don’t remember much about the interview. However, Jan Hendrickx asked me what I thought I could bring to the campus. After reflecting on her question for a few moments, I replied to her with words similar to these: “I can bring to Mount Vernon a passion for students to view themselves as global Christians with a world mission.”

During these years since 1989, I have seen that vision *increasingly* become reality from 1989 to 2006! Praise God! To seek to learn is to seek to serve...at home and around the world!

For example:

During the past few years, January term courses have taken students to work and study in *sixteen* countries worldwide. An MVNU faculty led trip to Turkey and Greece is scheduled for January 2007 and will be led by Drs. Serrao and Varughese. Dr. Randy Cronk, Jim Hendrickx, John Donnelly, Wayne Yerxa, Teacher Education and Family and Consumer Science professors lead students each January in study programs at home and abroad.

MVNU students increasingly participate in semester abroad programs where, again, learning and service go hand in hand. For example: Australia, China, Egypt, England, Nicaragua, Lithuania, Russia, Uganda, and Costa Rica. This summer Dr. David Wilkes led a study group from MVNU to England for a summer course in the UK.

MVNU's Collegians Chorale returned a month ago from Europe where they ministered in Portugal, Spain, and Southern France. They worked with Nazarene leaders in these countries and presented concerts in these countries.

Last month, Dr. Paul Madtes led MVNU's first medical work and witness team to Nicaragua. MVNU pre-med majors joined alumni who are physicians and health care professionals to serve the people in Nicaragua with health care needs. Administrators and faculty traveled to Romania to serve.

I have watched with gratitude the creation and development of the Division of Campus Ministries on campus led by Dr. Gary Sivewright and so ably assisted by Rev. Joe Noonan. Students volunteer for spring break, summer, and yearlong trips to travel around the world to work and witness.

In recent years, MVNU students, working through the Campus Ministries division, have served in twenty countries around the world. Perhaps you read the article recently in the Mount Vernon News regarding the summer trip to Benin, Africa to work with MVNU alums, Dr. and Mrs. Matt Price, missionaries in the Church of the Nazarene.

Hundreds of students each year travel to serve in urban *and* rural areas in our region and throughout the nation. MVNU students are involved *every* weekend in various ministries throughout our region.

Five of our students traveled to Korea Nazarene University in July to participate in a Kids Camp on the KNU campus. The purpose of the camp was to engage Korean children to conversational English.

One more initiative that has taken hold within the past several years is our cultural diversity initiative on campus. Mr. Jim Singletary and the AIM students are a blessing to us. AIM stands for:

- A American Students of Color (African, Latino, Asian, Native American)
- I International Students
- M Missionary students (MKs) also known as “Third Culture Kids”

I am thrilled with a growing number of AIM students on campus.

As you know, the MVNU faculty recently approved a new academic major in urban ministries where students will be trained for ministry in the large urban cities of our state, nation and around the world. Indeed, the MVNU family has traversed the globe living out the university’s motto: To seek to learn is to seek to serve. Life changing!

In addition to strengthening a culture of excellence in education and nurturing campus life as a faith community, I have been relentless in challenging students to view themselves as global Christians with a world mission.

Perhaps my most satisfying experience at MVNU was the year-long process through which I led the faculty and staff in a review and restatement of our vision statement:

Mount Vernon Nazarene University:  
an academic community of faith,  
shaping Christlike leaders for lifelong  
service and global impact!

To this vision MVNU is passionately committed.

As you know, in November 2005, I announced to the MVNU Board my plan to retire from the university. As mentioned at the Faculty/Staff Awards dinner, my successor will be elected in November, to assume the office of MVNU president on February 1, 2007.

I want to make one final recommendation to the faculty.

As you continue to review the General Education core of the traditional academic program at MVNU, I encourage you to include two requirements:

1. A service-learning component, and
2. A cross-cultural component.

Over the years we have increased the number of service-learning opportunities for students but have not required this component of students. It really is part of MVNU’s DNA. Just do it!

As reflected in just a sample of the recent cross-cultural experiences offered by MVNU, the university is providing more opportunities for students to engage in cross-cultural interaction.

I urge you to require a cross-cultural component to what we expect of every student who graduates from the MVNU traditional academic program.

This component needs to be added across the curriculum to emphasize the distinctiveness that MVNU graduates experience face to face immersion within a culture other than their own. It reflects our intentionality to prepare students to become global Christians.

The professional workplace increasingly expects college graduates to be inter-cultural literate. Careers are enhanced by cross-cultural experiences. We have been talking recently on campus, Dr. Wilkes, in particular, about preparing a curriculum for a growing number of students who will work in countries in which English is a second language. In cross-cultural experiences, business students meet international business leaders, and pastors practice reaching out to needy people who are different from parishioners in their home congregation.

We have come a long way in “shaping Christ-like leaders for lifelong service and global impact.” Now, “make my joy complete ...” to use the words of St. Paul, by revising the general education core to include the twin components of service learning and cross-cultural experiences.

Anne and I want you to know that we love you, we believe in you and we ask for your continued friendship and prayers as we transition to a new phase of our lives. And please continue to pray for your colleagues, the faculty and staff, and for our students this year at Mount Vernon Nazarene University: an academic community of faith, shaping Christ-like leaders for life-long service and global impact.

Amen.