

FRONTLINES

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A WINDOW INTO AMERICA'S UNIVERSITIES

NOVEMBER 2020

FACULTY COMMONS® – A CRU MINISTRY

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We don't know...and that's OK

Rick Hove, *Faculty Commons® National Director*



A few weeks will transpire between when I compose this and when you read it.

In a somewhat steady state universe, these days might feel inconsequential. But, with a national election taking place during the next couple of weeks (amidst a pandemic!), I admit a bit of trepidation.

I know this for certain: whatever happened during the election (and aftermath), as you read this, you and I will not know what tomorrow brings, or the next month, or the next.

This weekend I purchased a utility sink from a coffee shop owner who was going out of business. No way he could have known the mall would close, and he'd lose his shop and livelihood.

My friend Phil died last week. We took trips to Alaska together to fly fish. He hiked the Grand Canyon this summer with his wife, without a care in the world, unaware of any illness, yet he met Jesus face to face

only a few months later. No way he could have known that.

A Faculty Commons staff member told me about visiting Clemson University last week. During a long walk, he saw just three students—in the middle of fall semester! No one could have seen that coming.

The Bible assures us that we do not know the future: “*You do not know* what tomorrow will bring” (James 4:13). We never have, and we never will. And that's OK.

Uncertain of the future, we nevertheless find joy where we are planted. In each of these uncertain moments God meets us. Dr. Heather Holleman teaches English and is one of the few faculty members at her university who teaches in the classroom, in person. She told me that her students profusely thank her for showing up, being positive, finding joy in them, and teaching them. Christian professors, of all people, can lead the way in finding joy and hope during each day.

Uncertain of tomorrow, we still bountifully sow to the future. The author of Ecclesiastes told us: “In the morning sow your seed and at evening withhold not your hand, for *you do not know* which will prosper” (Ecclesiastes 11:6-7). Our faculty group meetings have moved online. Welcoming new professors is now done online. And, our regional conferences are

Cru Names Steve Sellers as New President

“I am grateful to follow in the footsteps of Bill Bright and Steve Douglass to help bring the good news of God's love and forgiveness to the world,” said Steve Sellers at his commissioning service October 1. “In the midst of the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs in every nation, we believe that every person needs to encounter the life-changing love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ.”

Serving in a variety of leadership roles in Cru/Campus Crusade for Christ over the last three decades, Steve Sellers has demonstrated a commitment to the mission of proclaiming the gospel to the world.



As president, Steve reiterated that Cru will not veer from its calling of “Helping to fulfill the Great Commission by winning, building, and sending in the power of the Holy Spirit, and helping the body of Christ do evangelism and discipleship.” †

online. Because these conferences are online, they are now accessible to professors across the globe. Imagine our surprise when at our first virtual event, initiated in Wisconsin, we found one professor from Bolivia, another from Slovenia, and eight professors from Brazil!

And, uncertain of tomorrow, rather than be incapacitated in fear, we leap to offer the hope that is solely possible because we know the One who holds and orchestrates the future. These days are a blessing in disguise: they remind us how desperately we need “something greater than ourselves,” a “sure and steady anchor of the soul” (Hebrews 6).

We will never know tomorrow. But we know Him.

If ever there was a time for Christian faculty to find joy and hope in their labors on campus, to sow bountifully, and to find comfort in the God who is the fully-in-control King, it is now.

How desperately our universities need Christian faculty and graduate students as salt and light in these trying days! Thank you for making this possible. †

National Director of Faculty Commons® Rick Hove and his wife, Sonya, live in Durham, NC, and have three adult children.

§2

Full of Promising Potential

Ministry Profile: Duane & Alice Walters, Faculty Commons representatives, *Mississippi State*



Two years ago, Faculty Commons representatives Duane and Alice Walters arrived at Mississippi State University and discovered a vibrant faculty group—full of promising potential. These faithful professors had been meeting and praying for the campus for the past 15 years.

The group had formed when a team of Faculty Commons staff members visited MSU seeking to launch a faculty ministry. They met with 50 Christian professors in three days! Professors readily volunteered to form a leadership team and began implementing strategies they learned to reach their campus for Christ.

When Duane and Alice arrived, they introduced additional ministry resources and outreach strategies, and God used them to renew the vision of how God could work on campus through professors.

For example, Duane and Alice prepared welcome bags for the 152 new faculty and brought them to the leadership meeting. Several professors agreed to distribute the bags in their departments, introducing themselves as Christians, and letting the new faculty know about the group. Dr. David Peebles gave one to his research associate, a struggling Christian, and the gift bag opened the door for deeper discussions about Christ.

Dr. Bill Elmore wanted to reach out to students. Last spring, before COVID-19 restrictions limited in-person meetings, 7-8 students regularly came to his home

to discuss the fundamentals of faith in Christ. The study is growing, and this fall 15-20 students are attending that study via Zoom.

When Dr. Rima Musser joined the faculty group, she received encouragement and training in how to appropriately share her faith as a professor. After taking her class, one student emailed: “Thank you for being an influence in my life. I was baptized on Sunday! Your class helped me realize many of my excuses were fallacies.” In January, Dr. Musser became the president of the faculty group and is thankful Duane and Alice will serve alongside her.

In February 2020, the group at MSU hosted a regional *A Common Call* conference for Christian professors in the state. They discovered professors on other



Faculty at MSU are studying *Mentoring One Another* to discover how to better emulate Christ and reach out with the good news on campus.

campuses wanting to meet, learn, and step out in faith to see what God will do at their universities.

The faculty group is now discussing *Mentoring One Another*, written by Faculty Commons representative Dave DeHuff. This eight-chapter Bible study workbook is

designed to equip professors to thrive spiritually where God has called them—and to be a mentor to other faculty. Professors at MSU will continue to build on the existing potential of the group as they deepen their sense of purpose and calling through this study. †

Mississippi State University

As the state's land grant college, MSU opened in 1880 to provide training in “agriculture, horticulture, and the mechanical arts . . . without excluding other scientific and classical studies, including military tactics.” It is now a comprehensive, Research 1 university and a major contributor to the state's economic, social, and educational development.

- Enrollment: 22,226
- The National Science Foundation ranks MSU in the nation's top 5% for agricultural sciences and natural resources and conservation—a position held for over two decades.
- MSU's supercomputer, with 5 quadrillion computations per second, is the fourth fastest in U.S. academia and ranked in the top 100 in the world.
- One of ten schools in the U.S. to hold all three National Security Agency's centers of academic excellence credentials.
- One in three of today's on-air broadcast meteorologists is a graduate of MSU's nationally-recognized meteorology program.
- National lead university for the FAA's Center of Excellence for Unmanned Aircraft Systems.
- *U.S. News & World Report's* Top Universities for International Students.
- Home to the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library.
- Best-selling novelist John Grisham is a 1977 accounting graduate.
- Women's basketball team was national runner up in 2017 and 2018—including a semifinal win snapping UCONN's 111-game winning streak. Go Bulldogs!



McCool Hall is home to the College of Business and the PGA Golf Management program.

Finding His Calling

Dr. Steven Hall, Associate Professor of Biological and Agricultural Engineering, *North Carolina State University*

A spiritually searching young man drawn to adventure, Steven Hall hung on the slopes of Mt. Denali in 1992 and watched as helicopters took out the bodies of four climbers who had fallen the day before. His own blood oxygen level was dangerously low as he began a difficult descent from 17,000 feet with his climbing group.

Later, Steve concluded, “I should have died, too, but I didn’t.” So he asked, “OK God, You want me here. What do You want me to do?”

God was about to show him. In graduate school in California, Steve noticed a poster that read, “Engineers Need God: Call Pete for Bible Study.” While studying the Bible with Pete, Steve found himself drawn to the unique figure of Jesus.

He completed his PhD at Cornell University, where he was mentored by a professor who was a Christian. There, Steve found his calling.

“I am a ‘profess-or,’” he explains, “one who witnesses and shares the wisdom they have found; and a father, one who nurtures

and encourages with humility.”

Over 21 years as a professor, the last four at North Carolina State University (NCSU), Steve has focused on mentoring graduate students, because, he says, “they are at a critical place where they could develop into professors, or leaders in industry and government, with a sense of calling and mission.”

Faculty Commons representative Mike Mehaffie recruited Steve to be a key leader in the Christian Faculty Staff Network at NCSU. Steve mentors younger faculty and helps shepherd the group’s various evangelism efforts.

Faculty Commons is in turn discipling Steve through our Faculty Fellows program, which connects 20 key professors from around the country for training in evangelism, discipleship, and building spiritual movements.

Recently the group discussed the book *Master Plan of Evangelism*. As he studied Jesus’s strategy to reach the world by pouring His life into twelve disciples,

Steve felt God sharpening the focus of his own calling. “The Lord is inspiring me to reach out to twelve men and mentor them for twelve years,” he told Mike. He’s already begun to form this group.

As a faculty leader at NCSU, Steve is living out the calling that he first began to sense on the slopes of Mt. Denali. He’s eager to learn and willing to step out in faith. Mike Mehaffie is thrilled to have him at NCSU: “I want to build on what Steve is doing. He wants his life to count for the Lord.” †



Dr. Stephen Hall teaches aquaculture at NCSU and also relishes his call from God to be a fisher of men.

Join us in Prayer

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” – Colossians 4:2

1. Pray for professors who are exhausted teaching online and in person.
2. Pray for great wisdom and creativity regarding new ministry strategies in these strange COVID-19 times.
3. Pray for Gaby (article below) and our other Grad Fellows leaders as they reach isolated grad students.

Redeeming a Common Problem

Ashley Holleman, *National Director, Cru’s Grad Student Ministry*

I first met Gaby about a year ago. She would soon begin grad school and was full of excitement and energy to reach her grad school peers and others with the gospel. She had been involved in Cru as an undergraduate student and interned with Cru stateside and overseas before starting her PhD program in art history at the University of Oregon.

Because of her heart for her friends and previous experiences on the mission field, Gaby was a top recruit and perfect candidate for Grad Fellows 2020. This intensive program equips, resources, and mobilizes Christian grad students to launch and or lead a Cru movement for grad students on their campus. We were also super excited for Gaby to join Grad Fellows because through her we could reach grad students with the gospel on a campus in Oregon, one of the toughest places in the country for the gospel to spread.

But as her first year of grad school progressed, her excitement regressed. She found herself really struggling and burdened by what some have coined “double isolation.” She had not met any other Christian grad students on campus and was thus separated from believers who understood and shared her life as a grad student. And her non-Christian grad friends didn’t fully understand her life as a believer. She felt overwhelmingly disconnected and deeply discouraged.

Throughout the challenges Gaby faced, God remained close and faithful to her.

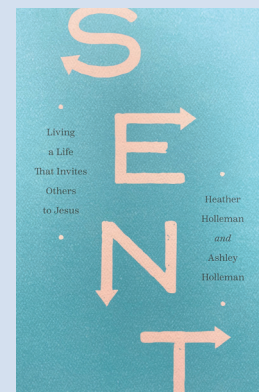
She joined our Grad Fellows program this summer, and we’re so glad she did! Through this step of faith, God brought Gaby into a network of 19 other Grad Fellows from across the country after a difficult year of being completely alone, wondering where or how she could connect.

And the story doesn’t end there. God enabled Gaby to continue trusting Him for her dream of building a community at the University of Oregon that could bring the hope of Christ to her grad school peers. This semester, Gaby launched a Bible study that already involves nine grad students. Gaby attributes it all to God. She told us, “I honestly feel that He’s gathered the group and brought the people to us.”

Gaby’s first-year experience is unfortunately far too common. Grad students across the nation feel discouraged and disconnected daily. But it doesn’t have to be that way. God is using the Grad Fellows community to build up leaders like Gaby and is honoring their faith to reach even the most difficult places with the gospel. The Lord is helping Gaby create something that didn’t exist before; He’s drawing isolated students together in community. And together they can bring the hope of the gospel to other grad students who are not just disconnected from each other, but from the One who created them, loves them, and gave His life for them. †

Sent: Living a Life that Invites Others to Jesus

Author’s perspective: Dr. Heather Holleman, Lecturer, English, *Penn State University*



This past year my husband, Ashley, and I enjoyed doing something we never imagined we would do together: we co-wrote a book on evangelism.

Moody Publishers invited both Ashley and me to write our unique perspectives on talking to others about Jesus. I’m the extrovert who feels supernaturally gifted in evangelism. Ashley is an introvert who doesn’t feel he has the gift of evangelism. Yet Ashley regularly shares his faith with others as part of his “sent” identity. What does this identity look like? How can we develop it?

Together, we outlined a book on the core principles that shape our sent lives and the practical steps we take every day to engage others in spiritual conversations.

This book presents evangelism as a natural part of who we are in Christ. It’s as normal as brushing your teeth or eating breakfast every day. The number one way Jesus describes the Father in the book of John is “the Father who sent me.” Jesus understood His sent identity, so by the time we get to John 20:21—where Jesus says “as the Father has sent me, I am sending you”—we realize the importance of that word “sent” to our identity.

We teach that sent people live their lives from three core principles: God is always at work to draw people to Himself; He uses people to draw others to Jesus; and He continually invites us into the work of evangelism. The foundation of evangelism begins with these principles; it’s who we are rather than what we do.

We then move into the practical steps to living this sent life. We encourage readers to make a list of five people who don’t yet know Jesus, and then they can begin praying for their salvation using biblical prayers. We also teach readers how to develop interpersonal curiosity, tell great stories of transformation, and ask the “Four Best Questions” (listed in the book) to lead to spiritual conversations.

By God’s grace, Ashley and I more than survived the process of co-writing a book. We actually loved writing together, teaching together, and now holding radio interviews and speaking events together. We hope you enjoy this new book as a great resource for personal use, small groups, and church curriculum. May God help us all understand our sent identity. †



University of Oregon grad students studying *Encountering Jesus: An Exploration of His Life and Works for Grad Students*.

Fast Facts:

Susan poked her head into my office with a smile and said, “I want to tell you I love Jesus too!” In 20 years at *Sacramento State* I’ve never had a student lead with that!

Wanting students to see him as more than just a jet propulsion expert, an *Oklahoma State* professor introduces himself in class with: My story. My family. My faith.

A professor at the *University of Florida* led a grad student from *Duke University* to Christ when he joined her Zoom Sunday School class.

An esteemed professor from *Kenyatta University* is working with Faculty Commons staff to train and encourage faculty in Africa to reach students with the gospel.



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We want to hear from you. Please contact us at frontlines@facultycommons.org.

Your financial gifts help build movements of professors and graduate students to take the hope of Jesus Christ to the world: give.cru.org/2271527.