Anchoring in the One who called us, is timeless,

Ministry Profile: Barry & Susan Bouchillon, Faculty Commons,
Clemson University

Rick Hove, Faculty Commons® National Director

Previously sequestered to the vocabulary of dance and basketball, the word “pivot” erupted upon the scene, the ubiquitous description of COVID-19 survival behavior. Every organization, business, individual, and university pivoted. And pivoted. And continues to pivot.

Take Faculty Commons: Over a few days in March, when so many great conferences, trips, and other ministry opportunities vanished in an instant, we pivoted to embrace new opportunities. Much to our surprise, the land of Zoom offers new previously undiscovered advantages:

• Professors seem to be more open to online prayer gatherings, which erase the burden of travel.

• Faculty scattered across many states seem to relish connecting online, when previously many of them were unable to connect because of distance from one of our groups.

But we do know this: “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58). And Jesus is active on campus: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32).

The more uncertain conditions become on campus, the more Faculty Commons will pivot to adjust to these times. But we will strive to anchor in the One who has called us, who is timeless, and who will always deliver. May God guide and bless millions of professors and administrators as they seek to lead well in the fast-approaching fall semesters. And may He give Faculty Commons opportunities to love, serve, and offer the hope of Jesus Christ in the midst of a pandemic. Thank you for partnering with us in the great cause of offering the hope of Jesus Christ to our universities! Now, more than ever, we need you, and we are grateful for you. We pivot together, to face the world, anchored to the One who never changes.

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

Welcome Conversations

Ministry Profile: Barry & Susan Bouchillon, Faculty Commons, Clemson University

Phil Randall, one of the key Christian professors at Clemson University, enjoys watching Faculty Commons staff member Barry Bouchillon meet new professors.

Barry stops by their offices to say, “Hello, welcome to campus. I’m with a group of Christian professors called Faculty Commons.”

He doesn’t come empty-handed. Barry brings with him a “welcome bag” full of thoughtful treats—good coffee, snacks, and a welcome letter from the Faculty Commons professors. His wife, Susan, makes homemade poppyseed pound cake and etches a glass coffee mug with the Clemson tiger paw.

“But there’s something more that comes with the treats in the welcome bags,” says Phil. “It’s the chance to meet Barry.”

“A Clemson alumn himself, Barry directed Cru’s undergrad student ministry for 31 years. By 2017, a thriving Faculty Commons group had developed at Clemson, and he and Susan transitioned to full-time ministry to faculty.

Every year, Clemson hires 90-100 new professors. Barry finds a point to meet all of them can find. In fall 2018, he knocked on the office door of Roberto Risso, professor of Italian. Already known to Barry, Roberto had been reading the Bible and talking to God. “I saw it as a sign of God himself reaching out to me,” Roberto remembers.

Soon after, Barry and Roberto met at a local coffee shop and spent an hour walking through Romans 3 phrase by phrase. Roberto began at a sign of God himself reaching out to me, “”

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The Go-to Guy on Campus

Faculty Profile: Dr. Robert Bromley, Professor Emeritus of Accounting, Faculty Commons Affiliates, Central Michigan University

"Dr. Robert Bromley is the go-to guy—the mainstay...the backbone of the faculty ministry," explained Tobias Kayes, the Cru student ministry director at Central Michigan University. "When I arrived on campus in 2009, he was already busily engaged in faculty and student ministry.

In the mid-1980's Dr. Walter Bradley and Dr. Rae Mellichamp were instrumental in developing the Cru faculty ministry. They came to Central Michigan to provide encouragement and guidance for the newly formed faculty group.

Dr. Bromley and other professors faithfully put into practice what they learned. Weekly meetings for Bible study and prayer began. They encouraged each other to reach out to students and colleagues. These meetings have continued to provide fellowship, resources, prayer, and opportunities to join in evangelistic outreach for over 30 years.

Every year the faculty group publishes creative Christmas and Easter ads in the university newspaper as an outreach to students and other faculty. These ads enable professors to stand together to publicly acknowledge their faith. On average, 60-65 faculty and staff sign these ads.

For 20 years Dr. Bromley was the faculty advisor for the Cru student ministry. Tobias describes him as a support and advocate for Christian students who seek him out for insight and advice on ministry and life. Dr. Bromley encourages all his students to reach out to professors who sign the holiday ads. He and the faculty leadership team promote ways they can be involved with student groups on campus to advance the gospel.

When Dr. Bromley learned that most interfaith students had never been invited to an American home, he began to host Christian Christmas celebrations in his home. He and his wife, Mary, invite the institutions, arrange transportation for students to their home, and provide a gift for each student. Students hear the true Christmas message and discuss it with Christian students and faculty who also attend the party.

Newly retired, Dr. Bromley has now become a Faculty Affiliate, a program for former professors who want to continue ministering on campus. They receive regular coaching from Faculty Commons staff and have access to ministry resources. Their years of experience and the realities and opportunities of the academy like they do. Dr. Bromley's desire to stay engaged as an influence for Christ on CMU makes him a model Faculty Affiliate.

On Death
Book Review by Jim Hynds, Faculty Commons Staff Representative, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Many of us have a modus operandi of "don’t go there" concerning the subject of death—but in the end, no one dodge it.

Timothy Keller recently published On Death, a short book about the topic taken from sermon notes he preached at his sister-in-law’s funeral. He acknowledges that "death is hideous and frightening and cruel and unusual" and clarifies why we so avoid discussing it. Woven throughout the book are his thoughts on what "grieving with hope" truly means.

Confronted with the presence of death, Keller writes "there are two opposite mistakes we can make. One is to despair too much, the other is to shrug it off and not learn what we should learn from it. Neither will be of much benefit to us, so we must do as the Bible tells us to do: We should grieve, yet we should hope, we should make our way from our dear and dear, and finally, we should laugh and sing!"

My wife, Cindy, and I, read this book out loud together in the first few weeks of the pandemic. We, along with our nation and world, have now been gripped by the reality of death. What an opportune season to have real discussion with people around us about issues that matter.

This book meant so much to us that we mailed 80 copies to faculty members we work with at UTC. A roil of banter and interaction has resulted. One professor commented: "What a thoughtful gift! I’ve started reading the book and am finding it very timely and wise!!" Another: "I’m loving the book and just want to say thank you. I have learned a lot from it!" And one more. "Such a topic is always timely, especially in the face of the present preoccupation with the pandemic. Death is the surest thing to happen to humanity, and it is not the final stop!"

Keller concludes with an appendix of Bible verses and comments to read over the course of a week—one set for those facing their own imminent death and another for those facing the death of a loved one. His honest focus on biblical promises for Christians is extremely helpful.

I will keep copies of this book handy to offer to friends who are in some way experiencing “valley of the shadow of death.” After you read it, I expect you will want to too.

Life Through Death
Ashley Huffman, National Director, Cru’s Grad Student Ministry

It felt like a death when we learned that we could not host our annual Grad Fellows Summer Mission because of the pandemic. But at the same time, God put a promise in my heart from John 2:24 that this death could "bear much fruit."

A normal Grad Fellows Summer Mission involves two solid weeks together in State College, PA. The schedule would include teaching in the mornings, students applying what they learned in afternoon sessions on campus, and community-building times in the evenings. Could we successfully turn this into a virtual experience?

Our team felt led by the Lord to create a digital summer mission, all hosted through Zoom, and see what God would do. In the end, it surpassed our expectations!

A virtual event, hosted two evenings per week for five weeks, was much easier for grad students to attend. We ended up with 20 students, instead of the 10 we had originally registered. For the month of July, our team of 12 staff led them through an incredible program. In addition to the bi-weekly evening sessions, we hosted small group Bible studies, community-building nights, and even an evangelistic outreach—all online.

We challenged each student to begin a "care and share" strategy of reaching out to five other graduate students with the hope of the gospel. They invited these friends to the outreach, a webinar on healthy sleep strategies taught by a Christian professor, and more than 70 people participated. Some of our grad fellows later were able to share the gospel with their friends who attended.

The digital format allowed us to invite special guests we could not have afforded to fly in, including professors from around the country, the original creators of several of Cru's key evangelistic tools, and Rick Hove for our commissioning dinner. Students took incredible steps of faith to practice leading and speaking throughout our mission and to plan strategies to launch grad ministry on their campuses. This fall, we will expand to five new campuses—the Universities of Akron, Florida, North Dakota, Oregon, and Washington! Many of our existing grad student movements will be strengthened and expanded.

Our team led a truly exceptional experience that built community, cared well for students, and offered training for a lifetime of ministry. Now, we'll continue to invest in these students' love and ministry for two more years through monthly coaching calls. We are all praising the Lord for an incredible Grad Fellows Summer Mission!"