

FRONTLINES

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A WINDOW INTO AMERICA'S UNIVERSITIES

APRIL 2021

FACULTY COMMONS®—A CRU MINISTRY

1 Local? National? Both.

Building local and national graduate and faculty ministries—we need both. §1

2 The Campus Connector

Connecting UMB Christian faculty and grad students in the medical disciplines. §2

3 From Radio to the Professoriate

An unlikely professor leads the Christian faculty group at Georgia Southern. §3

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Care-Share strategy: grad students share Christ through caring conversations. §4

Local? National? Both.

Rick Hove, *Faculty Commons® National Director*



Recently Sonya and I built an addition to our house. For months we wrestled with decisions such as “one bathroom or two?” and “laundry room, office, or both?”

Eventually we formalized the plan that held the greatest promise going forward (and that we could afford!). The architectural drawings became our North Star, guiding the project forward.

As we work to build a thriving, Christ-centered graduate student and faculty ministry, we know that our North Star must encourage and resource us both locally and nationally.

Traditionally, Faculty Commons' strength has been local. We have faculty groups on over 200 universities. Though most of our local expressions are smaller, there are over 150 involved professors at the University of Georgia and the University of Florida. Every campus needs a local movement to be salt and light in their community, to encourage and mentor younger Christian

professors, and to do the work of God's people in that space.

But the sociologist at the University of Arkansas, for example, also has close connections with sociologists at the Universities of Memphis, Notre Dame, and Texas. These connections can lead to strengthening the Christian influence in an academic discipline nationally. Professors travel to consult or teach, gather at conferences, and collaborate. Professors change institutions with some regularity. The design for our future must not only succeed locally, but it must foster a national movement as well.

The unexpected COVID-19 detour taught us some important lessons about building nationally. With Zoom technology it is relatively easy to convene professors from one coast to another. I watched in amazement the other day as a psychology professor in California encouraged a jazz professor in New England. Our local/regional *A Common Call* conferences for Christian faculty are now online, and to our surprise professors are joining these events from other states and countries! We have discovered we can gather affinity groups around the country such as women faculty, accounting professors, or graduate students in online meetings for the sharing of ideas, book studies, and prayer.

New Leader for Cru's Campus Ministry

The U.S. Campus Ministry of Cru, whose mission ranges from middle schoolers to university professors, has announced Shannon Compere as the new executive director. She is the first woman in that role and has served with Cru for 30 years.

Shannon understands well the challenges and opportunities for Christian professors—she is married to one! Dr. Marc Compere is an associate professor of mechanical engineering at Embry-Riddle University. In the summers, the Comperes enjoy traveling with teams of



Cru students on global mission trips to locations such as Poland, Brazil, and Ethiopia. †

Two new national strategies are our Faculty Affiliates and Faculty Fellows programs. Faculty Affiliates are retired faculty who join with us to help mentor current professors across the country. These Christian men and women are uniquely gifted for this, as they have the time, heart, and expertise. The Faculty Fellows program is designed to promote national momentum by convening some of our best faculty leaders across the country to learn from each other. They exchange ideas and encourage one another. Both programs are bearing promising fruit and have been unhindered by the COVID setbacks locally. We are quite encouraged by this.

We dream of the day when every university has a thriving Christ-centered

graduate student and faculty group—and across the country these individuals and groups strengthen and encourage each other. To succeed locally is great, but the needs and opportunities of the world require a national movement. And, a national organization alone will not suffice; we must flourish locally. We need to ask God to build both.

Pray with us towards this end. The final destination—the North Star of local and national—is strongly compelling and desperately needed. Only God can build this house. †

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

§2

The Campus Connector

Ministry Profile: Charlie Klepadlo, Faculty Commons Rep., *Univ. of Maryland, Baltimore*



“Can you help us in the med school?” asked a student at the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) School of Medicine. He met Charlie Klepadlo, Faculty Commons representative, through a Bible study in the UMB School of Social Work.

As Charlie coached those Christian medical students, he met Dr. Rick Bradbury at the School of Dentistry who was leading a Bible study for dental students. When Dr. Bradbury retired, Charlie began mentoring those students.

Soon, students in the School of Pharmacy asked Charlie to help them as well! Now Christian graduate students in social work, medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy had a place to grow spiritually and learn to be an influence for Christ in their work.

Students who attend UMB, an urban-center school, can be isolated and find it difficult to connect. Charlie knew all these groups existed, but they did not know about each other. He began connecting the groups and became the link that enabled them to collaborate on Bible studies, prayer, and outreach projects to build an interdisciplinary ministry.

Charlie also had connections with faculty advisors for each group. They did not know each other, so Charlie helped them develop a faculty leadership team. As these professors meet, they plan outreach and ministry projects. For example, they hosted a panel of healthcare professionals who shared how they live out their faith at work. The 50 students who attended peeped

them with questions!

Dr. Koury, the faculty advisor for the Christian dental group, began mentoring Daniel, who was the student leader. Daniel explains: “Arriving at UMB from a Christian home, I felt I was one of the only Christians there. But once I got involved with the group and the Christian faculty, I felt connection and belonging. Seeing faculty like Dr. Koury who are using their platform for Christ encourages me to be an influence for Christ wherever I am.”

Charlie's work of connection at UMB continues. Wendy in the School of Nursing explains, “Charlie is a good connector and helps us develop in ministry.” Recently Charlie helped Wendy begin a nursing Christian fellowship group that includes students and faculty. This semester they



A panel of social work professors share with students how their faith influences their work in health care and answer questions about being a presence for Christ in their discipline.

became a recognized group on campus and now meet weekly for Bible study.

Because of Charlie and the faculty group,

believing students from all UMB medical disciplines are learning to be an influence for Christ now and in the future. †

University of Maryland, Baltimore

Founded in 1807, UMB has six nationally ranked professional schools: dentistry, law, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and social work, plus an interdisciplinary Graduate School. It is a thriving academic health center with 58 buildings near Camden Yards, the Baltimore Convention Center, and Baltimore's famous Lexington Market.

- Enrollment: 7,137
- UMB opened the first public medical school in the U.S., and it is the fifth oldest medical school in the country.
- Home of the first dental school in the world.
- Florence Nightingale trained the founder of the School of Nursing, which is one of the oldest in the U.S.
- Fourth oldest school of pharmacy in the U.S. and the first pharmacy school in Maryland.

National Rankings

- Dentistry, 6th, NIH Funding (Publics) FY 2019
- Medicine, 12th, Primary Care, *U.S. News & World Report* (2020)
- Law, Four specialties in top 10, *U.S. News & World Report* (2020)
- Nursing, Four specialties in top 10, *U.S. News & World Report* (2020)
- Pharmacy, 14th, *U.S. News & World Report* (2020)
- Social Work, 17th, *U.S. News & World Report* (2020)



The Interdisciplinary Life Sciences building is a center for research, active learning, innovation, and inspiration.

From Radio to the Professoriate

Professor Profile: Reed Smith, Professor of Communications Arts, Georgia Southern University

Reed Smith's high school friends in Zanesville, Ohio never expected that he would become a college professor. Looking back at his younger self, Reed explains, "I was shy, my grades were poor, and I failed at almost everything I tried."

After high school, Reed eventually landed a job in radio and discovered a talent for broadcasting. So, he took a course in public speaking at the local college.



Dr. Reed Smith's life took some unexpected turns thanks to his wife, his mentors, and the communities of faith who invested in him along the way. Now he leads Faculty Commons at Georgia Southern.

It was there that he met his wife, Bev, who sent Reed's life in an unexpected direction. Bev and her family were followers of Jesus. They took him to church and shared their faith and their hearts with him. "I landed my dream job as a part-time radio announcer, my grades improved, and, most importantly, I gave my life to Christ," Reed remembers.

At this local college, Reed met a professor who saw his potential and mentored him. She encouraged Reed to pursue a bachelor's degree, then a master's, and then hired him to teach at his alma mater. Though he was known as a "nice" professor, Reed never mentioned his faith to anyone.

After completing his PhD, Reed took a position at Georgia Southern University—and there he decided to make his faith visible. He began writing Bible verses and inspirational quotes on the chalkboard before each class. A student told him: "You are the first prof I have ever seen do that. I wanted to let you know that I am a Christian, and I see that you are, too."

Reed prayed that God would raise up an organization on campus for Christian faculty. God answered. In 2017, Cru's student ministry leader invited Faculty Commons representative Buz Amason to help launch Faculty Commons at Georgia Southern. Reed was recruited to help lead the group.

Now a core group of 18 professors meets regularly. They make themselves visible on campus through ads about the Christian

faculty group in the student newspaper and by mentioning they are followers of Christ in their classes. Buz and Faculty Commons provide Reed with fresh ideas and resources for effective and appropriate ways to have a Christian influence within the university.

"I have been encouraged with the boldness Reed has displayed," says Buz. "He's faithful to his walk with the Lord, available to lead, and willing to learn." Reed finds Faculty Commons' nationwide network of Christian professors to be supportive and encouraging.

Looking back on his unexpected life, Reed notes, "God had a plan for my life long before I did, and I praise Him for it!" †



Congratulations to Faculty Commons staff Ashley and Heather Holleman whose book *Sent* won Outreach Magazine's 2020 Evangelism Resource of the Year award! *Sent* reminds readers that God is always at work to draw people to Himself, and He invites us to join Him in this work. The Hollemans challenge us to embrace our "sent" identity in joyful and practical ways.

Physically Distant, Relationally Close

Ashley Holleman, National Director, Cru's Grad Student Ministry

One year ago, the pandemic tore through normal routines, unforgettably altering ways of doing ministry. Now, a year later we are continuing to answer the question that COVID-19 created for grad ministry: *How do we help grad students continue reaching their peers in the midst of a pandemic?*

One answer the Lord has given us: the Care-Share strategy. Created to repair and close the relational gaps that the virus has created, Care-Share equips grad students to move towards others by the power of the Holy Spirit with the hope of Christ.

The primary goal of the strategy? We train grad students to engage five people within their natural pathways in caring conversations through asking thoughtful questions—and we equip them with tools to integrate faith and Scripture into everyday conversations. The hopeful outcomes? Grad students strengthen their ability to naturally share the relevance and work of Christ in their lives during daily conversations with peers and colleagues. And, most importantly, the Care-Share strategy aims to introduce grad students across the nation to the gospel.

Why? Because the Lord isn't isolated, quarantined, or distanced from us or our friends. His plan to bring rest, peace, and salvation to weary, frustrated, and lonely people cannot be thwarted, even by global pandemics. This is actually a promise—Psalm 33:11 claims "The plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of His heart through all generations." And His plans to move towards people involve us

and the students in our movements.

Take Nathan for instance, a PhD candidate at Georgia Tech studying engineering, showing great care to his friend Brad. This year, he has taken multiple steps of faith to share Christ with Brad, creating time in his full research schedule to answer Brad's spiritual questions, involving him in the grad Bible study he leads, and patiently walking him through the gospel message.

Sam, a PhD candidate in integrated bioscience at the University of Akron, asked a question from the Care-Share training to some of his colleagues: "How are you taking care of yourself during this pandemic?" This question not only sparked a long conversation, but also provided the chance for Sam to talk about his spiritual life with each colleague in return.

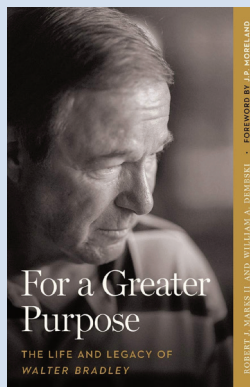
Scott, an MBA student in The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, showed the relevance and importance of Christ in his life to many of his classmates when he emailed his department, inviting them to join him at church the morning of his membership induction. "It may only be five minutes of the whole service, but it will be one of the most special days of 2021 for me," he told them. Fifteen of his classmates attended church with him that Sunday!

These grad students were providentially placed in their natural pathways and were used by the Lord to reveal to others scriptural truth and the beauty of the gospel—even during a global pandemic.

May God draw grad students to Himself, despite us being far from each other. †

For a Greater Purpose: The Life and Legacy of Walter Bradley

Perspective by Dr. Walter Bradley, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Mechanical Engineering, Baylor University



Editor's Note: Because he is a beloved founding professor of Faculty Commons, we asked Dr. Bradley to give his impressions of this inspiring and practical book for Christian professors and graduate students.

In the spring of 2018, Dr. Robert Marks and his wife, Monika, invited my wife, Ann, and me to dinner at the Baylor University Faculty Club. There he shocked me with the news that he and our mutual friend Dr. Bill Dembski wanted to name a Discovery Institute center

after me. And they wanted to commission a biography of my life as an example of integrating faith and science, particularly in the area of origin of life—and more broadly in how I integrated my work as a professor with my Christian faith.

The book traces my admittedly humble beginnings in Corpus Christi, to my life-changing coming to faith at a church camp at age twelve, and through the next six decades. My father's death when I was 14 both tested my faith and made me assume the role of "man of our household," a role I took seriously for the sake of my mother and sister. I entered the University of Texas at the age of 17 and left almost seven years later with a wife, a baby girl, a baby boy, a BS in Engineering Science and PhD in Materials Science and Engineering. Then I accepted a tenure track position at the Colorado School of Mines, the #2 ranked Metallurgical Engineering program in the country.

I am pleased that *For a Greater Purpose* accurately portrays my faith journey with Ann as a struggling Christian couple—disciples who were mustard seed Christians in the beginning, afraid to be open about our Christian faith for fear of what it might cost in social acceptance. Even more daunting was the fear of what it might cost in my job as an untenured professor.

My journey to freedom, to grow from a mustard seed to a tree in the garden, to become a light in the dark as a university professor, and to heed Jesus' call to Peter as a call to me to get out of the boat and walk on water (Matt 14:22-33), is a wonderful story of Jesus' deliverance. But I had to get out of the boat! And what a blessed life God called me to—walking on the water. †



Fifteen Penn grad students joined their friend Scott (front center, red mask) at church on the Sunday he was being received into membership.

Fast Facts:

Six professors at *UMass Lowell* are studying the book *God Space*, learning how to engage others in spiritual conversations that open doors rather than shut them.



Eight professors from *Cal Poly Pomona* are meeting weekly via Zoom to work through *Sent*, Heather & Ashley Holleman's book on the joy and adventure of evangelism.



This past year a *University of Florida* professor met online weekly with four colleagues in an investigative Bible study, and in February he led one of them to Christ.



After attending a virtual Faculty Commons conference for professors, an attendee told us, "I now see my role at the UMN differently than I have been recently."



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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.