

BRAZIL NAZARENE COLLEGE'S RESPONSE

Steven D. Hofferbert

One would expect a response from Brazil, the land where Paulo Freire lived and practiced pedagogy, to be practical. It is true that the Brazilian mind seeks to analyze the possible theories and place into practice the ones most beneficial to a process or operation.

What we have on the table is the task to maintain the doctrinal integrity and ethos of Nazarene higher education as defined and practiced in the early decades of our denomination. Historical precedents are not in our favor. Whether an entity would be a religious denomination, an institution of higher education, or a business, the entity is challenged with identity crisis, flat to negative growth, and a bi-polar conflict of whether to fulfill an original charter or to morph into a profile of like entities.

In the business world, many companies have proven that it is not imperative that a business die or at least diverge from its original purpose at a certain age. Many companies have revisited their original goals and mission statements in order to re-organize, re-contextualize, and revitalize their companies for even bigger and better things. Remaining faithful to an original charter or mission statement does not necessarily indicate that an institution must remain small in size as in the initial days. Companies such as IBM have consistently shown that an entity can continue growing and address the needs of the continually changing modern context without compromising the mission statement.

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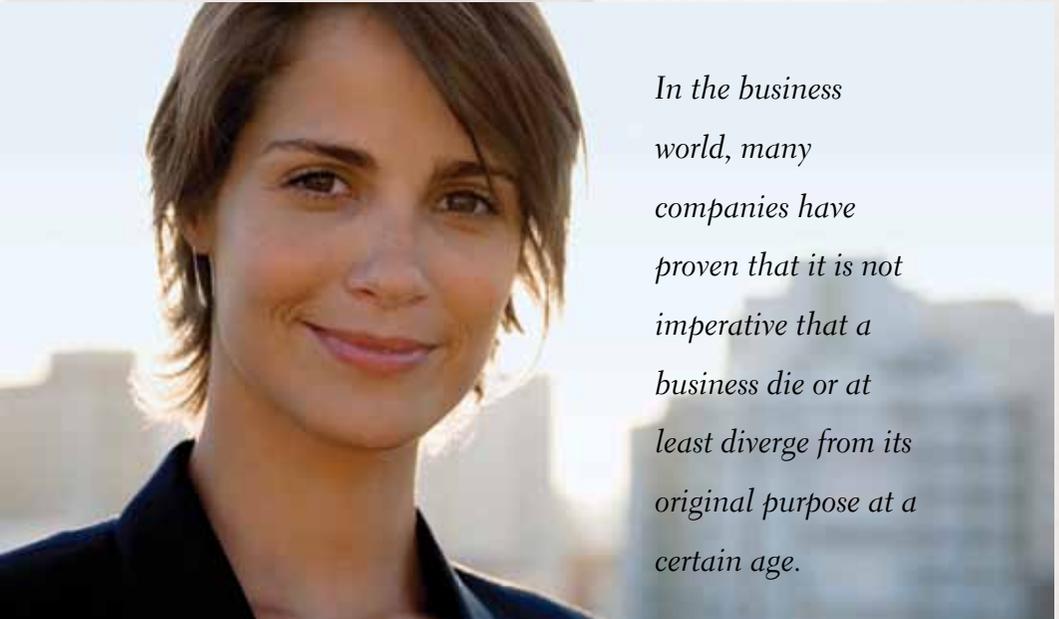
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INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITY

One of the realities in Brazilian higher education is the use of interdisciplinary activity among the courses a student will take. Interaction is encouraged among professors of different areas of study in order to try to offer the student a broad perspective concerning the essence and nature of what is being studied. Each article in this document applied the essence and essentials of the Christian faith within the context



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of the discipline represented. This document should be the beginning of an ongoing dialogue of professors of all fields to establish an interdisciplinary conversation of the essence of the Christian faith within the context of higher education. Symposiums and panel discussions involving faculty and students across disciplinary lines would be beneficial.

OUTCOMES-BASED FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

As educators, we are very familiar with outcomes-based procedures for educational purposes. We might also consider the outcomes-based principle for overall future development of our institutions. Let us put aside for a minute the implications of outcomes for the individual student and apply the principles to the institution as a whole.

The process to obtain accreditation for Brazil Nazarene College was different than for institutions in the United States. In Brazil, institutions of higher education must be accredited before they enroll students and begin classes. Also, the federal government of Brazil is the accreditation entity instead of regional accreditation associations. We began in 2005, to prepare for accreditation by submitting a five-year institutional plan that entailed all aspects of development for five years.

Although the Brazilian government uses a comprehensive list of evaluative instruments, the outcomes of the institution seeking accreditation are very important. One of the requirements of accreditation for BNC was to prove from the list of courses in any given major that it could produce the profile of the graduating student described for that major. BNC had to prove that the outcomes of the entire four-year program would actually produce the desired profile of the graduating student. For this purpose, we devised a program of self-evaluation for the institution that would be conducted by students and professors on a semester basis and on a four-year basis. Each semester every student evaluates every aspect of the institution, from physical facilities to services offered. Every student also evaluates each course and each professor. In addition to completing the evaluations, the students take a comprehensive, one-hour essay exam over the content of each course.

The professors are also required to fill out a self-evaluative electronic form that covers their performance in their courses; their relationships with students and colleagues; and the campus services and programs. BNC has established a storyboard of procedures to collate, compile, and consider the results from these evaluative instruments. The future performance and development of educational programs depend on understanding and assimilating the outcomes from the evaluations of what is happening on campus and what is being learned in each course.



Although BNC has been in operation for only two years, we believe that the system of self-evaluation will be one of the keys to grow a great institution of higher education in the future.

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STEPS TO BECOMING A DISCIPLE-MAKING MISSIONAL INSTITUTION

The mission of Brazil Nazarene College is to prepare and equip bi-vocational ministers and missionaries. What BNC defines as bi-vocational is not a minister who is working part-time in a certain profession and working part-time in the ministry. BNC has the philosophy that Christians should have full-time professions in various areas, but within the context of their professions they should also be ministers to everyone around them. The vision for BNC is to graduate students who can make a difference in their context and community for Christ, whether it is in a community in Brazil or in a

cross-cultural context. The goal is for graduates to work in their chosen professions and fulfill their vocations to make a difference in the lives of the people around them.

Brazil is an emerging center of Christianity. Missiologists believe that Brazil will prepare and equip many Christian leaders in the future. We believe that BNC has an important part in this task. The mission statement of BNC speaks to the role of BNC to equip students to become disciple-making

professionals, in whatever profession they may enter. Although BNC is preparing those students who have declared a profession in full-time ministry, BNC is also actively involved in equipping all students to fulfill their God-given call and vocation to minister to people in their chosen professions.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND SPIRITUAL VITALITY

Academic excellence and spiritual fervor are not necessarily inversely proportional. Our institutions can increase in academic excellence and not only maintain spiritual vitality but also grow in spiritual insight and praxis. The concurrence



of academic excellence and spiritual vitality should challenge all Nazarene institutions. The goals for these two items must be established and pursued separately; one does not guarantee the other.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Renowned excellence is not an impossible dream for Nazarene higher education. There are several qualities of our institutions that will allow us to obtain academic excellence that large secular universities find difficult to achieve. Our faculties have a common purpose, mission, and ethos. This is not true of the large secular university. Also, professors of our institutions have a common world view base and common Christian faith, of which large secular universities cannot boast.

Our faculties share a common goal of equipping, mentoring, helping, and discipling students. This enables our institutions to be in a better position to implement productive educational methodologies by all of the professors than is true in other institutions. Better methodologies will foster academic excellence.

The Brazilian Ministry of Education, which accredits Brazil Nazarene College, insists that our professors be involved in two basic activities for academic excellence: research groups and the production of articles and books. The Ministry of Education delineates two types of research groups: groups with the institution in a given academic area and research groups that bridge the scholarship of several institutions. One step to academic excellence is to develop research groups among professors in which upper-class students do understudy projects with professors. Academic production of books and articles by our faculties is another step to academic excellence.

My prayer is that each of our Nazarene institutions of higher education might continue to emphasize Christ-like servant-hood, holiness of heart, and a strong desire to fulfill the Great Commission. We do not have to choose between academic excellence and spiritual vitality. ■



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