

MODELS FOR EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATION

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I've been asked to talk to you today on the subject of intra- and inter-institutional collaboration. I must tell you that my interest in collaboration started long before I began my work at Mount Vernon Nazarene College in 1989. When I moved to European Nazarene Bible College in 1978, one of the first tasks asked of me was to go through a yearlong self-study of the institution, along with MidAmerica Nazarene College. It was out of that yearlong self-study of the two institutions that a relationship between MidAmerica Nazarene College and European Nazarene Bible College was developed, a relationship that continues to this day.

Within three months of arriving in Manila in 1984 as president of that graduate institution of the Church of the Nazarene, I was asked to join leaders from several other seminaries in the area. The issue was how can we keep Asians in Asia, Asians who have the potential for teaching at our undergraduate schools? The Church of the Nazarene has, I think, eleven theological education institutions in the Asia Pacific Region. We faced that same problem. How can we prepare teachers who will return to their homeland, to their institution, and be an administrator or faculty member?

We recognized that the seminaries involved, the three seminaries—APNTS, Alliance Biblical Seminary, Asia Theological Seminary—were offering programs to the Master of Divinity level. We knew our teachers needed more than the Master of Divinity. We began to ask the question, “How can we work together as seminaries in Manila to develop a Master of Theology program

with an emphasis in biblical studies, an emphasis in theology, an emphasis in church history? How can we collaboratively work with providing faculty into a program that will enable our best students who are coming through the M.Div. program to go to one level above the programs that are offered in these various denominational institutions?”

We developed a Master of Theology program with emphases in biblical studies, in theological studies, and historical studies. Many of the students moved into these undergraduate institutions to teach. Today there are graduates of the AGST program—Asia Graduate School of Theology—as we developed it, teaching it in our undergraduate institutions. One of those students went on to get additional graduate work and began to teach just recently at APNTS.

It was out of that initial success in this collaboration a degree was offered through the Asia Graduate School of Theology structure that we really became bold. We said we need teachers in Christian education. The appropriate degree is a Doctor of Education with an emphasis in Christian education. We had Ph.Ds in Christian education in the various seminaries around the city. So we did develop a Doctor of Education program. It was rigorous and today there are students throughout the Asia Pacific Region in various schools who graduated through the Asia Graduate School of Theology with a Doctor of Education degree with an emphasis in Christian education.

My interest in collaboration started long before I moved to Mount Vernon Nazarene College in the United States. It has continued since I have been on campus. I'll mention some of those experiences in this session today on intra- and inter-institutional collaboration, a case study. When we talk about intra-institution collaboration, we are talking about collaborative efforts within a given institution, so the key word is within. Intra-institutional collaboration involves collaboration within an institution. Your institution may not have the attitude that we faced at

other institutions. But if a teacher is a teacher in a given area, it's hard for that teacher to see that he or she can make a contribution, or collaborate with someone in another discipline, with an administrator, with administrative processes, or even with students. It's difficult to believe they can develop something that would benefit the teacher, the student, and the institution.

Collaboration among and between institutions will not go very far unless there is a commitment within the institution to move beyond the "silo mentality" where you're only in your area of study, your area of responsibility, and you will not move beyond that to help or to create with someone else.

Your booklet contains an article that I wrote for a publication this spring, entitled "Turning Institutional Collaboration into Institutional Strategy." I will be referring to that article today and Monday during my presentation..

Collaboration is more than teamwork, which tends to be more informal, or cooperation, which tends to be more transitory. The arrow on the board behind me moves from teamwork to cooperation to coordination to collaboration. It shows there are levels of intensity with which we work together, within an institution and between institutions. We must acknowledge that not everyone is going to be as passionate as you perhaps, or a colleague, about this subject. However, they may be cooperative in some areas.

Recognize that not everyone is going to be as involved in certain projects as you. Finding that level of intensity with which they are comfortable and the level which is needed is an important step in getting the right people in the right place doing the right thing.

At any successful and prolonged collaborative initiative, there is a champion at the core. A champion is someone who will bleed, if I may use that word, who will work far beyond the expected hours on a given assignment—someone who will champion the idea of collaboration. A quote on this issue says, “Leadership springs up at the intersection of personal passion and public problems.” Isn’t that a good quote? “Leadership springs up at the intersection of personal passion and public problems.” In collaborating situations there must be a champion, someone who will be, not just a designated leader but, a passionate leader.

This event could not have happened without the passionate concern and involvement of a Jerry Lambert and an Al Truesdale and others who were a part as that concept emerged. Beyond their designated responsibility was a passion. Because there was passion, personal passion, intersecting with a public need, a public problem, a group concern, this event has convened. If you have a champion, then you will see teamwork and cooperation or coordination, then collaboration.

Again, the key is to get the right people in the right place at the right time. Someone has said “Collaboration is about touching people where they are.” Another person has said, “The desire to make a difference is what collaboration is all about.” The desire to make a difference . . . not just to spin the wheels or to go through the motion, but to make a difference, that desire is what it is all about. Another person said, “Being a man or a woman is a matter of birth. Making a difference is a matter of choice.” But at its basic level, when we talk about collaboration, we’re talking about touching people where they are.

The text *Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining and Enjoying the Journey* defines collaboration as “a structured approach to a well-defined and mutually-beneficial commitment to common goals.”

The book also gives a formal definition of how collaborating parties share responsibility, accountability, resources and rewards. I really like the last quote. This quote summarizes, I believe, my own intense understanding or involvement with collaboration. Collaboration for me is more than just words. Collaboration is a way of life, not a program.

Included in your booklet are a number of collaboration quotes. I share these with you as a resource that has been very meaningful and significant to me. The first one is by Mother Teresa, “What you are doing I may not be able to do. What I am doing, you may not be able to do. But all of us together are doing something beautiful for God.” Another is “You can do what I cannot do. I can do what you cannot do. Together, we can do great things.” One of my favorite quotes is this, “None of us is as smart as all of us.”

I found there are four phases of collaboration. There is the stage where you work one-to-one, or individual-to-individual. In that situation, you envision the results. You build trust. A faculty member goes to an administrator and says there’s a problem here. The administrator, who may be very good in computer services, says to the faculty member, “Yes, we can do this.” You’ve moved out of your specific area of responsibility to work with someone else for the good of the institution, for the individual, or for the group. The first stage of collaboration is that of working individual-to-individual, envisioning results and building trust.

Stage two is working individual to organization where you empower teams, you confirm roles and you organize an initiative. In the CIS initiative in Russia, lead teachers are brought in to teach a core of 25 courses to trainers who will be the teacher in his or her home country or in a training center for which he or she is responsible. It is an example of an individual working in relationship to an organization. The CIS project is really an extension program of ENBC, a

collaboration where an individual goes in and works with a group. You seek to empower them, confirm them, organize initiatives with them.

Stage three is initiatives where organizations work with organizations, or institutions work with institutions. Stage three is what characterized the Council of Education, USA and Canada several years ago to develop a plan of networking and collaboration. In the handout I've included a draft of a philosophy of collaboration that came out of our study together. What would emerge within your own Council of Education in Africa or the Asia Pacific Region would obviously have to fit you. I do have the full document entitled "A Strategic Process for Collaboration and Networking, USA/Canada Council of Education, Church of the Nazarene" if you would like to look at the complete document.

Stage four is when organizations work with the community, where you engage outside organizations to change or improve the system. I believe most of us will be involved in stages one, two and three, even though I do believe that there are opportunities for stage four involvement.

Near the end of the handout I included some website resources on institutional collaboration. Several times I've referred to the Asia Graduate School of Theology. There are many other websites. These are ones I thought would be most helpful to you. There are several websites in the Asia Graduate School of Theology, one University of South Africa, another Hong Kong Center for Research in International Collaboration, six universities in northern England, and then the World Bank, a joint venture with developing nations. If you know of other websites that we could add to this, I'll have a running list and we can keep developing this list of website resources.

I'd like to talk briefly about the risks of collaboration and the benefits of collaboration. Most of us are results-oriented individuals and we want to see results immediately. Sometimes we work for individuals or boards who expect results. But there are risks to the issue of collaboration. Why do we do this if the risks are so great? Collaboration is not a quick fix. In fact, it's a slow process. A leader cannot mandate collaboration to happen. We may mandate it but we do not often see immediate results. It is a slow process.

Someone illustrated it like this recently. There's a flower that grows in water in various parts of the world called a lily pad. During a 30-day period of growth, that lily pad does not show any growth at all for 28 days. On the 28th or 29th day, that lily pad grows 50% of its full or mature growth level. On the next day it grows another 50%. It is fully-grown in a two-day period. It reminded me that often our projects take time. One of the risks involved in collaboration at the level of institutional collaboration or inter-collaboration is that it takes time.

Compromise is involved between leaders, between institutions, between participants in a collaborative initiative. It involves give and take. Collaboration, quite frankly, is not good for an authoritarian leader or authoritarian individuals who have to have it done their way. Collaboration involves the give and the take of creative juices flowing and recognizing that you are not the only one who has a creative idea or the answer to a situation we are facing. The second risk is that it involves compromise.

Another risk is that it involves communication. It is a perennial problem for us. There is a quote that I include that says, "There can rarely be too much communication in collaboration."

There are also some benefits to collaboration. One of those is the creative juices; the innovation that comes, the ideas that emerge when you ask people to be involved in a project whose

conclusion has not yet been reached. One of the overwhelming joys of working on collaborative initiatives involves seeing individual talents come to the surface. The individual talents, the individual gifts, the abilities, even the individual perspectives that come when you ask people for their advice is beneficial. You structure opportunities for people to share their perspective. What a fulfillment!

When you give individuals an opportunity to participate, the commitment level grows within him or her, beyond the level they had prior to their involvement in a collaborative initiative or the opportunity to share

Let me go on to why Mount Vernon Nazarene College turned to collaboration. We turned to collaboration because I felt there was an immediate need. A number of years ago, at a meeting with our Council of Education, US/Canada presidents, I said to them, “Unless we do a better job in the next 25 years of working together, we will not have eight vital, vibrant, visionary liberal arts colleges and universities in the United States.” Each school had their own identity as institutions. We were doing things quite well, thank you. But in looking ahead, I felt we had to work together differently if we were going to be vital and visionary institutions. It was out of that discussion that a task force was formed. We spent about three years working on a strategic plan for networking and collaboration.

We felt there was some shared thinking and planning that we could benefit from both as an individual institution and from the other institutions in our council. We felt like there was some resource development could take place collaboratively and at a level that we could not do on our own. Remember, we were not in a crisis at this point. We were making the observation that if we continued to work in isolation for the next 25 years there would be a crisis and there would be a problem. We decided to be proactive and develop structures and ways and means by which

we could benefit from shared thinking, collaborative resource development and program coordination.

At our institution I felt there was a need for what I call a critical mass. I did not feel we had the foundation of students, the number of students that we would need to carry us into a new decade, or a new century. I wanted an institution that would just not survive but thrive in the 21st century. I knew we did not have the resources to do what I envisioned the institution I served would want to do. There was an immediate need. There wasn't a sense of panic but there was an acknowledgement of a need, at least on the part of trustees, and some faculty and staff. There was personal commitment.

And let me tell you, when you talk about collaboration, at whatever level or whatever stage at your institution, not everyone is going to jump up and clap their hands and rally around you, whether it be for international education and the collaborative issues you need intra-institutionally to do what you need to do, not everyone is going to be on board for that. First be there yourself and then find those one or two or three brothers and sisters who share that vision. Bring them along with you and work with those few until the circle increases and enlarges.

There was a commitment with me to seek a new level of institutional life and vitality. We realized that we needed help. We could not do it ourselves. Working collaboratively with other institutions, nationally and internationally, would be to our benefit. We could contribute and we could benefit from this kind of arrangement. Teamwork was a part of our culture and a part of what was happening on our campus.

There were some specific examples of what we did and what we were seeking to do. The goal we were trying to accomplish was to develop a campus-wide culture of collaboration so that it

would be very natural, within the institution, to seek others within the institution to work together on a common project or a common need. There was also a desire for individuals within our institution to link up with Point Loma, Olivet, NTS or some other institutions within the States, some overseas, to do that.

In the article “Turning Institutional Collaboration into Institutional Strategy,” you will find examples of our new levels of institutional life. We expanded decision-making where we interacted with local or regional churches, where we restructured our administrative divisions, where we networked with USA/Canada Council of Education, where we re-designed our processes, where we structured feedback mechanisms. I really do head an institution that is different in the year 2000 than it was in the year 1990. We’ve not just doubled enrollment and tripled our budget, but a way of thinking has emerged that is fundamentally different. That is what I’m talking about.

If some of the examples that are in the article can help you or if you can modify them, fine. If you find nothing in the article relates to you, fine. The issue is not for you to copy what I have done, or we have done, at MVNC but to give you an example of both intra- and inter-institutional collaborative projects.

The legacy then, an overview of our experiences, shows that we have seen projects on our campus involving collaboration at the organizational level, in our business processes, in everything from check requisition, to the registration process, and financial aid. These are the mundane kinds of things that often create a bottleneck or problem. You talked some earlier about the problems with financial aid and business processes. These things we sometimes don’t want to mess with because they take time. But they are the ones that create tension and difficulties. We spent an enormous amount of time across divisions administratively working on

this. I cannot imagine our institution doing things business-wise today the way we did even four or five years ago. The changes resulted from people on our campuses going and working with schools of like kind in our state and our region. They asked how are you doing it and what can we learn from you? We developed that trust relationship. We've learned from institutions outside our denomination but we've also gone to institutions within our denomination.

Let me conclude by sharing with you some lessons learned. Using collaboration to manage change is challenging. That may be a trite statement but it needs to be said. It is not a quick fix. It is something that is substantial in nature. It is challenging. I reviewed Mike's presentation from earlier in the week on managing change and from his presentation and from this statement and from your own experiences, you know this is true.

Secondly, a vision and need are required for success. Someone has said, each partner or each organization or each individual must know where they're going, or at least what they're working on and have some sense of direction of where they'd like to go for success to take place.

Regular communication is the glue of collaboration. How many of us have experienced situations where if we had just known, if we had just know? Next to an active, committed leadership a steering committee is required. Don't get hung up on the word steering committee.

I have a collaboration task force on our campus and they're always thinking of ways to involve other people and get people involved. They look at problem areas. The task force members themselves are not competent to address those but they say, who can? And they try then to identify people and bring them together and be a mentor, be a leader, in the process of collaborating.

Obviously, the greater the trust and communication, the faster and more profound is the benefit. So when it says trust is the cornerstone of collaborative efforts, it really is true.

And the last lesson I learned became really the title of the article that's in the booklet entitled "Institutional Collaboration as Institutional Strategy." In fact, you will notice on the cover of this booklet, Institutional Collaboration as A.I.E. (Academy of International Education). I began to realize that collaboration was more than just something I would do occasionally but it became embedded with us at our institution as institutional strategy, to the point that when we as an institution developed our agenda for years 2000-2010, we created a new initiative and we've included that as the last page in your booklet. We identified as strategic initiative 9, which is our initiative on institutional collaboration. We feel so strongly that what we're talking about conceptually here must become a part, an increasing part, of our institutional strategy so that we proactively identify ways and means to creatively and strategically collaborate with institutions and agencies regarding mutually beneficial academic and administrative partnerships. Thus it is emerging as a way of life for us. I'd like to say we're there now. It's not. Increasingly though, it is true. Institutional collaboration is becoming for us, part and parcel of our institutional strategy.

I close again by referring to the question of passion. The definition of leadership springs up at the intersection of personal passion and public needs. To ask the question, about what are we passionate as it relates to the institutions we serve? What is it about which we are passionate? So often I believe when we talk about collaboration, we talk about it intellectually but with little passion. But the word passion, if it's going to happen, must be a part of our thinking and our activity.

I looked at the 60 priorities today and I continually said “Wow” to those. Some of those were overlapping and some of those even could have been reworded. That is not even the point, but the fact that we are talking about it and we are prioritizing is getting it from our head down to our—excuse me—gut, the inner being of us. And our response, first of all, should not be, “Well, how can we afford this? How can this happen? Our first response ought to be, “Wow”! And when you hear projects on your campuses, don’t be the one who throws cold water on it. The first response ought to be, “Wow! Let’s do it or find ways and means and people by which it can be done.” Have that dimension of “Wow” within us when someone other than ourselves presents a project that we believe, that person believes, individuals believe can benefit the institution you serve. Leadership springs up at the intersection of personal passion and public needs.

When I return on Monday, if you’re still here, I do want to begin the process . . . and I see now you have already started the process of applying collaboration to the Academy for International Education. I highlight the quote of Al Truesdale that he sent to us, several times in fact, in our information, “The driving force behind the academy is a desire to maximize access to the rich educational resources in the Church of the Nazarene.” So we’ll do some reviewing and then we’ll talk about collaboration and the A.I.E. But that’s for Monday. It will be probably a summary of what has already started, I think, on Sunday, as I read this schedule. But thank you for letting me talk about, on this first day, institutional collaboration, a little about intra- and inter-institutional collaboration. Thank you.