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MONU- MENTOR



CEDARVILLE PROFESSORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE, ONE STUDENT AT A TIME

by Michele (Cummings) Solomon '91

In light of findings from a 2014 Gallup study on college outcomes, it turns out Cedarville has a decisive advantage over other institutions of higher education. “Feeling supported and having deep learning experiences during college means everything when it comes to long-term outcomes after college,” noted Gallup’s Brandon Busteed. “Unfortunately, not many graduates receive a key element of that support while in college: having a mentor. And this is perhaps the biggest blown opportunity in the history of higher ed.” (To read the study, visit cedarville.edu/gallupstudy.)

But Cedarville University is different. What is a glaring omission in many U.S. institutions

of higher education is a shining and prominent feature of Cedarville’s mission. From Discipleship Ministries to Residence Life, students at Cedarville have people who intentionally build into their lives. But perhaps the greatest source of mentoring is from faculty members. They are highly credentialed professionals who choose to pour their lives into students, modeling their passion for Jesus as well as their field of study.

Throughout its history, Cedarville has been blessed with faculty members who are selfless in their pursuit to influence the next generation of students. Whether they serve at Cedarville for five or 50-plus years, Cedarville professors give of themselves to their students at just the right time, in just the right way. It is who they are and what they do.

GIVING TIME

Faculty members at Cedarville know that time inside the classroom is just the beginning of forming relationships with their students. To make a difference — a real, lasting difference — professors spend time outside of class, and it may not be during regular office hours.

Stephen Boalt '62 transferred to Cedarville University with a passion for music. He played the trumpet but dreamed of being a vocalist and ultimately serving as a music minister. Something always held him back from being the singer he wanted to be. Enter Richard Cooke, Boalt's trumpet and vocal instructor at Cedarville, who served on the faculty of the music department from 1958–1962. After spending time with Boalt, Cooke determined something was restricting his throat.

Using his personal time outside of class, Cooke drove Boalt to a specialist in Columbus who diagnosed the problem and provided corrective surgery to remove growths from Boalt's throat. "Following the surgery and a period of healing," said Boalt, "I was able to sing like never before, with a three-octave range in full voice." He has since gone on to record nine full orchestral solo albums with some of the greatest musicians in the world. And it all began when a professor took the time to dig deeper.

Beth Cram Porter, current Chair of the Department of Music and Worship, is impressed — but not surprised — by Boalt's story. That same legacy of mentoring continues with the music department today. "Mentoring students is one of the highlights for faculty at Cedarville. We take this very seriously in our department," she said.

Mark Tucker '07 was a senior when he discovered the value of having a professor willing to go above and beyond to help a student. Tucker was interested in learning a skill outside of his electronic media major, but couldn't afford to take an extra course. His adviser, Clark Greer, an Assistant Professor of Communications from 1999–2007, gave up several hours a week to meet with Tucker and teach him Adobe Photoshop.

"He and I met regularly and worked our way through the tutorial, from page one to nearly the end," Tucker explained. "By the end, I was able to master the software and achieve a marketable skill, all without adding to my debt." Jim Leightenheimer '80, Associate Professor of Communications, confirmed Tucker's recollection of Greer. "Dr. Greer definitely spent significant time not only with Mark, but with other students pursuing research interests," he recalled. "My colleagues and I still value these mentoring relationships as some of the best things that we are able to invest in here at Cedarville," Leightenheimer continued.

Looking back at her four years at Cedarville, Lauren (Hanna) Sterrett '06 recognizes that the time April Crommett, Associate Professor of Exercise Science, spent with her outside of the classroom was as important — or even more important — as the time they spent inside the classroom. Sterrett recalled trips with Crommett to two national exercise science conferences as pivotal in helping her choose a career path. "We had hours to discuss the most fitting career choice for me," Sterrett explained. "My education was expanded far beyond the classroom."

When it was time for Sterrett to investigate graduate schools, Crommett went along with her to visit two programs, helping

her reason through a tough decision. Years after Sterrett's graduation from Cedarville, Crommett witnessed her master's thesis defense from the graduate program she helped her enter. "She still sends me notes and gifts of encouragement nine years later," Sterrett shared. "I am so thankful for her investment in me." Crommett remembered Sterrett as a student with great energy and charisma. "It was easy to come along beside her and encourage her dreams," she recalled.

Jamie (Widman) Koser '11 asked Sharon (Klopfenstein) Christman '92, Professor of Nursing, to mentor her during her final year in the nursing program. The two met together regularly throughout that last year. "Looking back now, I realize how much our regular meetings were a sacrifice to her," Koser recalled. "Often, we'd meet in the later afternoon and her two young kids would be around." Koser was an "out-of-the-box thinker" who always had big questions, Christman recalled. "It was a pleasure to meet with her regularly to talk about God, life, and nursing," she added.

SHARING TALENT

As with any professional field, experience brings insight and perspective that can make your work more enjoyable and your end results outstanding. Instead of holding onto that prized knowledge, Cedarville's professors share it freely. Boalt recalls his time spent in class with James T. Jeremiah, Cedarville's then President, fondly and with deep appreciation. "I knew that I didn't have the means to attend seminary like some of my classmates," he explained, "so I made the most of the classes taught by Dr. Jeremiah."

He was riveted by courses such as Bible Doctrine, Baptist History and Polity, Systematic Theology, and others, soaking up every bit of knowledge he could glean from his esteemed professor's compassion and powerful ability to teach. "These classes put some tools in my tool kit for serving the Lord in later years," he said. It was Jeremiah who recommended Boalt for his first ministry position, setting the course for a lifetime of service in music evangelism, preaching and singing in 35 countries, traveling two million air miles, and reaching countless souls for Christ.

Koser described Christman as being able to "teach the socks off any subject." Her greatest lesson, perhaps, was teaching students to have confidence in themselves as superior nurses because they were Christian nurses. "She explained to our class that because we have the power of God in us, we have the ability to see, hear, feel, smell, and sense things that other nurses cannot," Koser explained. "I was shocked,



and excited, to discover after graduation that what she said was actually true!”

Sterrett recounted the “infectious enthusiasm” Crommett had for exercise science and applying its principles to promote healthy living, which made her students want to learn. Crommett had worked and studied in Christian and secular universities, giving her a wide breadth of knowledge to pass along. She nurtured Sterrett’s interest in research, teaching her the research process and helping her present her first research project at a conference in Washington, D.C. And, according to Sterrett, “She even encouraged my crazy notion to write a book and helped me write a first draft.” Passing along knowledge, encouraging scholarship, building confidence ... just another day’s work for a Cedarville professor.

POINTING TOWARD TRUTH

At most universities and colleges across the country, you’ll find professors who spend time with and impart knowledge to their students. So, what’s really different about Cedarville? More than anything, professors here point their students to the truth of God’s Word, integrating it into every lesson in every course. Students don’t just learn facts and figures; they learn how to live a life that honors God in whatever profession He leads them to.

Tucker prayed with Greer before choosing a class schedule for an upcoming semester. A small thing, perhaps, but a reminder from a professor that every decision — whether small or large — should be committed to God first.

Sterrett recalled discussions with Crommett about living out her faith in any environment. “Dr. Crommett encouraged me to trust the Lord and His ways as I navigated life during college and graduate school,” she shared. Crommett’s personal story of trusting God in her own life — and a drastic move from the South to Cedarville — was an important example to her students then and now. After teaching at secular schools, Crommett enjoys the difference she finds teaching at Cedarville. “It is a blessing to teach at a university that promotes relationships that go beyond just student-professor,” she explained. “I can pray with my students and encourage them

in their struggles as they grow and develop.”

While a student, Koser marveled at how Christman balanced all the roles in her life — Christ-follower, wife, mother, nurse. “I knew she was so connected to Jesus, and I yearned to figure out how to balance life the way she did,” she explained. Those lessons still impact Koser today, now that she is balancing faith, family, and career herself.

“Dr. Christman didn’t just challenge me academically,” Koser explained. “She challenged me spiritually, speaking words of healing, wisdom, and hope — always in a way that seemed supernatural in timing and tone.”

For Porter, influencing a student’s spiritual walk is more important than anything her department’s faculty does in the classroom. “If a student graduates as a stellar musician or worship leader but is a mediocre person, we have failed. We are called to make disciples of our students, and that means engaging them beyond notes and rhythms,” she explained.

ACHIEVING TODAY

Boalt currently serves as the Founding Pastor of Grace and Mercy Fellowship in Glendale, California, and radio host for Salem Interactive Media’s KDAR-FM in Ventura County, California. Tucker spent seven years as the Media Director for a church in Florida before recently returning to Cedarville as the University Videographer. He is excited to work with current students who are interested in video production, passing along his expertise and investing in their lives as Greer did for him. Koser works part time as a registered nurse for Heartline Pregnancy Center in Warsaw, Indiana, and serves as the Mission Coordinator for Mission Point Community Church, where she plans, coordinates, and oversees outreach activities that impact her community — and the world — for Christ. Sterrett recently completed a second Master of Science program. She is now a physician assistant working in pediatric cardiovascular surgery at Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis.

Lives that were touched, now touching others. 🙏

Michele (Cummings) Solomon '91 is the Copy Editor for Cedarville University Marketing.



A MENTOR'S LEGACY

Thomas Mach '88, Chair of the Department of History and Government, shares how Murray Murdoch, Senior Professor of History, had a monumental impact on his life.

Murray first impacted my life when I was a student at Cedarville. His stimulating lectures breathed new life into my interest in history.

Murray helped foster a call on my life that kept me focused through the long years of graduate school. He had faith in me when I did not. I loved history, but that did not draw me to graduate school. It was a call to teach, to mentor, and to disciple that I had seen modeled by Murray.

I taught six years before returning to Cedarville. Murray had always been my teacher and mentor, but now he became my friend. Through some of the most difficult challenges of my life, Murray’s door was always open for godly counsel, encouragement, prayer, and, when needed, a hug. Murray elicits both respect and love. He has both from me.

Now, our roles have reversed. I serve as chair of the department he led for 25 years. He delights in calling me “boss.” While our responsibilities have changed, our relationship has not. I regularly seek his counsel and listening ear, and he is always available. I strive each day to be the type of leader he is. He facilitated the success of those that worked under him. He quickly sized up a situation and proposed a solution that everyone could accept. Without fail, he pointed us to the Word of God, whether for encouragement or correction. And he did it all with grace and kindness. I do not have these wonderful attributes, but Murray has set a standard for which I strive.

I am so grateful for his investment in my life. I can honestly say, I would not be at Cedarville University today, doing what I love, had not God put him in my life.