

MID-AMERICAN

THE MAGAZINE OF MID-AMERICA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY



SERVING WHERE GOD PUTS YOU

Dream **BIGGER.**
Do **GREATER.**

SUMMER 2016
WWW.MACU.EDU



A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,

They call them “life’s journeys,” those pathways we travel that seem a bit random and disconnected from the places and people we have met along the way. While we often see our career path dotted with stopping off points, God eventually shows us that He has been drawing a picture by connecting those dots.

Read the Book of Acts and one is captivated by the unfolding journeys of the Apostle Paul. At some point in his life, Saul left home in Tarsus, sailed to the coastline of Palestine ending up living in Jerusalem and eventually being mentored by the famous rabbi Gamliel. His education and core values compelled him to go to Damascus where along the way he encounters the Lord Jesus Christ. Out of his conversion Saul, best known by his Roman name Paul, would become a world traveler making over three global missionary trips. The historians acknowledge Paul to have been the greatest Christian missionary and whom God used to plant most of the First Century Christian congregations in Asia and Europe, as well as the writer of over half of the New Testament books.

Did Saul know where his life journey would lead when he first left Tarsus? I think not. Saul the Jew would become known as Paul the Christian missionary. Saul the Pharisee would become Paul the apostle and prophet of God. God was connecting the dots that eventually give us Paul the Christian missionary.

We do not know how significant every journey may be in our lifetime much less how it is just one point in a divinely master plan. We only see a dot whereas God sees the many dots forming an image of what we are to become in Christ Jesus.

I emphasized this insight to a friend who once questioned the value of obtaining a college degree. Before his senior

year, unforeseen circumstance caused him to drop out of college. We reunited a few years later, and I encouraged him to complete his education. He protested the suggestion using the logic, “Look what God is doing in my life these days. I’m blessed. I’m influencing people for the Kingdom. Why do I need a college degree?” My response stemmed from my own discernment of my life journeys. I told him that I never expected, planned or deliberately prepared to be a university president. Yet, when I look back at all of the career paths, the life experiences and even the educational preparation, I now realize that God was preparing me to serve him in my present role. I only saw my opportunities and responsibilities to serve Jesus where I was at that moment of time. Only He knew the mentoring needed and the pace of moving me from one location and job to another.

In this issue, you will read about people who have many “life journeys” which positioned them for the leadership and Kingdom work they now fulfill. Their present role in the Kingdom of God is a compilation of God’s positioning and preparation. You will read about the “dots” which formed the portrait of the men and women God intended them to become and the purposes which He has intended for them all along.

We rejoice that they remained faithful to God’s leading because the church has become the beneficiary of their obedience to God’s master plan!


Dr. John Fozard, President



Dream **BIGGER. Do GREATER.**

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Ben Shular is in Mbulu, Tanzania with Children of Promise sponsored kids for more on this story see page 8



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WEDNESDAY AND FRIDAY AT 10 A.M.

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MACU Men's basketball team celebrate after winning 2016 NAIA Championship title

TWENTY-SIXTEEN COMMENCEMENT

The largest graduating class in MACU history earned degrees from the university this May. A record-breaking 634 students graduated with associate, bachelor's and master's degrees in a ceremony held at Crossings Community Church in Oklahoma City.

After an opening foreword by Brian Clemens, MACU Board of Trustees member and distinguished recognitions for the MACU salutatorian and valedictorians, MACU President Dr. John Fozard welcomed Judge Timothy Philpot to the stage to give the commencement address.

During his speech, Judge Philpot praised MACU for turning out Christian leaders in all job fields, not just ones directly tied to the ministry.

"For those of you who have been called to full-time ministry, is there anything sadder than someone who is full-time but not full?" Judge Philpot asked the graduates, who cheered and applauded his words of wisdom. "And is there anything more exciting than getting out of bed and going to work every morning, not full-time, but full of the Spirit?"

"Don't let anyone tell you that lawyers and insurance salesmen and basketball coaches are second class Christians. You can integrate your work with God [anywhere.] The greatest mission field of the 21st century is the workplace."

Judge Philpot said that we don't need airplanes to become missionaries anymore. "Every morning I get out of bed at about 5:30, I open my Bible, I see what the Lord is saying, He comes and He talks to me and then I go to work. I promise you if you follow Jesus Christ, God has a wonderful plan for you. Let that plan happen."



To the graduating class of 2016, I would like to offer my sincerest congratulations on this momentous occasion. May you continue to trust in God as He leads you into your limitless future as a MACU alum.
- John Fozard

DISTINGUISHED RECOGNITIONS

College of Arts and
Sciences (CAS)

VALEDICTORIANS

Kayla Renee Baldwin

*Bachelor of Science,
Mathematics/Business
Administration*

MULTIDISCIPLINARY

Hannah Lüdtke

*Bachelor of Science,
Business Administration/
Behavioral Science*

MULTIDISCIPLINARY SALUTATORIAN

Jenny Lea Pratt

*Bachelor of Science,
Mathematics*

College of Adult and
Graduate Studies
(CAGS)

HONOREES WITH ACADEMIC DISTINCTION

Cheri Atkinson

*Bachelor of Science,
Criminal Justice
Administration and Ethics*

Melissa Bramblett

*Bachelor of Arts,
Accounting and Ethics*

Brian Burton

*Bachelor of Science,
Psychology and Ethics*

Denise Crowley

*Bachelor of Science,
Psychology and Ethics*



*Do You
Dream Bigger?*

With more than a dozen
programs to choose from, it's never
been easier to earn your degree at
MACU! LEARN MORE AT WWW.MACU.EDU/

You Belong Here!



ELIZABETH COX

TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS AGO, a steep decline in the state's mortgage industry meant closing doors and broken dreams for many Oklahomans. But Elizabeth Cox knew it meant someone with a higher power had a higher purpose for her.

"I just felt like God would open some doors," Cox said. She never dreamed those doors would lead her right back to her alma mater.

After nearly three decades and as many university presidents, Cox retired from her position as MACU's Administrative Assistant on May 13.

Cox called her time with MACU "a wonderful journey."

"It's been such a privilege to work with so many different types of people and the giftedness they have. Each of them have made me who I am today. I just can't thank them enough for the privilege of getting to know each of them and working with them."

Cox has seen the school — and the state — through many tragedies and triumphs. When some feared MACU would close due to financial struggles, Cox said she never lost faith.

"I [knew] that God had His hand on this place. I really felt strongly about that. I felt like it would never go under and that God was going to use it and take it to

greater and better places."

She witnessed some of that greatness firsthand after the May 20, 2013 tornado, which devastated parts of south Oklahoma City and Moore. The day after the storm, MACU students, faculty and staff members rallied together to provide housing and collect donations for the victims.

"It's exciting to see ... people willing to come together and work as a team. It was exciting to see the college do that in a way that was an outreach and a mission to the world."

**"SHE IS TRULY REMARKABLE
IN HER LOVE FOR THE
UNIVERSITY'S MISSION,
HER COMPASSION FOR
HER COWORKERS AND
OUR STUDENTS."**

Cox's connection to MACU traces back to its time in Houston, Texas, as Gulf Coast Bible College, where she studied music.

"At first, I didn't think that I would go to college. I had some other goals that I

accomplished when I was 18, but the Lord just kind of worked with my heart."

As a student, Cox said she had many wonderful opportunities to grow as a musician and — more importantly — as a Christian. She performed with traveling groups like Inside Out and Reflections.

"It seemed like we were always doing concerts somewhere, always doing something with music. It was such a privilege to work with such talented people who could play all kinds of instruments and who had such beautiful voices."

She said she was honored to have been on that journey during her college years at GBC. "Traveling across the U.S. and meeting so many people and seeing the church as a whole, seeing it bigger than what you realize it is ... it's just such a joy to be a part of."

She brought that joy with her to MACU, where President John Fozard, Ph.D. called her legacy "remarkable."

"I once joked that we needed to insure her brain because she carried so much of the school's history in memory," he said. "She is truly remarkable in her love for the university's mission, her compassion for her coworkers and our students."

Cox called it a blessing to work with Fozard and the previous university presidents she worked under, John Conley and Forrest Robinson.

"I learned so much from them: their wisdom, their visions, the guidance they give to students and to myself."

One of Cox's favorite aspects of the job was watching students grow, graduate and create change over the years.

"I loved the fact that I could look back and see students across the U.S. and in other countries serving the Lord. I feel like this has been my ministry these years."

"As you get to know the different journeys that they've been on in their lives, I think that's the thing that makes it so beautiful. We're all part of God's tapestry as we come together and work together for the kingdom of God. It's been very much a blessing for me to have the privilege of working here with all the various types of people and getting to know them."

Just as God opened the door that led her to MACU 28 years ago, Cox said she knows He will be opening doors into the next chapter of her life as she spends retirement with her husband, Troy and their family.



ELIZABETH
with husband Troy



ELIZABETH
*with grandsons
Chany and Zyan*



INTERNATIONAL

Ministry

WHEN MACU PRESIDENT Dr. John Fozard struck up a conversation with his van driver in Seattle, Wash., he had no idea that he was about to embark on a life-changing ride with a university alum.

As it turns out, President Fozard's van driver was Ben Shular, Chief International Officer and Director of Global Strategy for Church of God Ministries. Shular is responsible for organizing and interfacing international ministry for the CHOG in 86 countries outside the United States and Canada.

With an undeniable heart for ministry and for the CHOG, Shular is a great advocate for MACU's online program – he has two degrees from his time as an Evangel – and an even greater witness for what God is doing through CHOG ministries around the world. President Fozard realized quickly that God had a hand in this special drive to his Ministries Council meeting as the van wheels turned and Shular shared his incredible story.

From childhood, Shular had a calling to serve and put others' needs above his own. When he married his wife Kelli (Lander) on May 20, 2000, the couple went on a mission work team for their honeymoon. The first thing they wanted to do as a couple was to serve the Lord together. This pattern of service continued in their future; as their friends visited exotic locales for their annual family vacations, the Shulars went on mission trips.

Shular's work ethic was forged under the discerning eye of his contractor father. Life was good, and Shular was content in his career managing electrical construction projects. But like the best of friends tend to do, God sometimes calls when we least expect Him to, and Shular felt compelled to leap out of his comfort zone and into cross-cultural ministry. In 2004, after time spent preparing with basic theological and cross-cultural education in Colorado and Florida, the Shulars found themselves serving the CHOG in the eastern African country of Tanzania.

"Though it wasn't my primary plan, I really felt called to a larger role in mission work," Shular said. "If I have learned anything in life, it's that God's plans are better than my plans."

The Shulars partnered with the Tanzanian CHOG on education-based programs. They managed and continued to grow the Aldersgate Education Center, a private Christian school of over 900 students; the Babati Bible School, a three-year pastoral education program taught in the local language of Kiswahili; and Children of Promise, the CHOG child sponsorship program. While operating these programs was the daily job, the end goal with the Tanzanian Church of God was to leave it self-sustaining in



**"GOD'S
PLANS ARE
BETTER THAN
MY PLANS."**

tries



IN THIS PHOTO
Ben Shular educating Pastor Raymond Maloka and Fundi Hasan on the use and benefits of a builder's level.

both finances and leadership. During their eight years in Tanzania, the Shulars worked to bring each of these large programs to an indigenous self-sufficient level that continues to this day.

As he worked to improve education for others, Shular felt he needed to continue his own. "I had heard of the flexibility and quality of the Mid-America Christian University online programs, but I thought I was too busy," he said.

That's when he remembered the advice a friend gave him. "He told me that I had to attend MACU now – that I was always going to be too busy. But if I started now, in a few years I would be busy with a degree or busy without one." Shular made the decision to enroll in an online degree program, often waking up at two or three in the morning to participate in chat rooms with his classmates living in the United States.

Shular said he had several instructors and classmates who left an undeniable impact on his life, including Greg LaPat, a constructively challenging professor. The business and quantitative analysis skills learned in LaPat's digital classroom played a key part in preparing Shular with tools and strategies to focus on solving global issues.

His hard work and dedication to his classes paid off in the form of a bachelor's degree in Christian ministries in 2010. Three years later, Shular earned a master's degree in business administration. Then, in 2014, his time as an Evangel led him to his grandest adventure yet.

It was then that Church of God Ministries (CGM) asked Shular to join their executive team as the new director of the international ministries portfolio. Shular said that as the Chief International Officer, his mission is to make Jesus the subject in every country of the world by training up indigenous pastors to be CHOG leaders in their own countries. "There will not be the continued effort to have North Americans travel to another country and create a North American church in a foreign country," he said. "That creates no ownership. It will not be successful in self-sufficiency or self-propagation."

Shular said the 86 countries where the CHOG is present are currently divided into five regions, each with a regional coordinator on the ground to organize CGM missionaries and partnerships with national leaders. Those regions are Africa, Europe and the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean. The strategy and approach for each area is different. The work is conducted underground in some Asian and Middle Eastern countries, but is experiencing significant growth. Global Strategy missionaries are establishing connections and empowering the people of these nations so that they can self-circulate the Word of God in the local language and culture. In other countries, the church is more established and Global Strategy's role is more one of advice and encouragement.

"In Germany, we are partnering with a very established Church of God to minister to the Syrian refugees moving into their German neighborhoods. We are



assisting to proactively build relationships that lead to life change and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ,” said Shular.

One of the most important parts of global ministry, Shular said, is to work with and through the national leadership of the CHOG in each country rather than around or against them, which would build distrust of Global Strategy and CGM. “We want to build more successful partnerships with lasting efforts and be a valuable benefit for that country. I ask our missionaries to have the mindset of a consultant that brings specific knowledge and expertise to empower the leadership of an organization, but not to take it over.”

He said MACU’s global learning program helps ensure the success of that mission by making the tools necessary for ministry accessible to people around the world. Shular hopes to see that program grow even further as MACU maintains its reputation as a “pastor-producing college which trains Biblical, spiritually based leaders for the kingdom ministry.”

If others can absorb anything from his story, Shular hopes that it is to listen to God’s calling for their lives, to step out in faith and take action immediately.

“I reflect back on my life and see both the good and bad experiences that have formed me into who I am today. Success and failure are both learning opportunities. Letting go of our wants and following Jesus’ example to put others’ needs above our own is a great guide. I strive to have the nature of Christ as Paul describes in Philippians 2:5-7.”

Shular underscored the difference between serving and being a servant. “You can serve doing what you

want to do, when you want to do it. But a servant does what is needed, when it is needed, even if it’s not what you want to do. The example of Jesus Christ was of a servant doing what was needed, when it was needed. We as Christians are to follow and emulate this example of Christ.”

He encourages others to continue their education now instead of later, and he hopes that he can inspire students to take action, the way his friend encouraged him to, and enroll at MACU. “It truly is never too late to further your education and make your dreams come true. You will always be busy, just choose to be constructively busy and empower yourself for the call God has on your life.”

Although Shular’s work connects and sends him around the world, he currently calls Anderson, Ind., his home. He travels one to two weeks every month while his wife stays at home with their three sons, ages 8, 6 and 18 months. Over the next few years, Shular said his biggest personal goal is to continue empowering CHOG congregations around the world and to find a balance between his family, work and travel.

MACU asks that you continue to keep the Shular family in your prayers as they continue to do the Lord’s work both at home and across the globe.

SHULAR
with director
of The Shelter,
Asim Das



PHOTO BY JOSH MILLER
Noah, Ben, Jonah, Kelli and Judah Shular



FOUNDATION
being laid at
Aldersgate
Education
Center



2016
DIVISION I
MEN'S BASKETBALL
NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

IN A BREATHTAKING PLAY, junior guard Malcolm Mann took the ball with four seconds left, drove the court and put in a game-winning layup that wobbled off the backboard and twirled around the rim before sinking into the net and securing a place in MACU athletics history. Mann's buzzer beater gave the fourth-seeded Evangels a thrilling 100-99 overtime victory against the top-seeded Georgetown Tigers and the school's first ever NAIA National Championship. The championship win topped off a legendary first year for head coach Josh Gamblin, who joined the MACU family in 2015.





MEN'S BASKETBALL SEASON RECAP

In what will forever be known in Mid-America Christian University lore as the "drive for a championship", Malcolm Mann took the ball with four seconds left, drove the court and put in a game-winning layup that spun around and found the net to give the No. 14-ranked and fourth-seeded MACU Evangels a thrilling 100-99 overtime victory over the No. 1-ranked and top-seeded Georgetown (Ky.) Tigers and their first ever Buffalo-Funds NAIA National Championship March 22 in the historic Municipal Auditorium in Kansas City, Mo.

After a review of the play to ensure Mann got the shot off before the clock expired, it was ruled good – and the Evangels were sent into championship euphoria.

Mann's winning score finished off a career night of 23 points for the junior guard.

MACU head coach Josh Gamblin, 27, became the youngest coach to ever win a Men's National championship at the four-year level. He was named the Rawlings-NAIA Head Coach of the Year after guiding the Evangels to their first-ever NAIA national title in his first season at the helm.

"We played a tough schedule, we were tested and we had a lot of transfers," Gamblin said. "They love and play for each other and when you do that, good things tend to happen."

The Evangels' national title run received glowing headlines from all corners, from Mann's game-winning shot being named #3 on ESPN SportsCenter's Top 10 to great coverage by renowned columnist Berry Tramel of *The Oklahoman*.

To cap off the historic season, the Evangels received a special invitation to the Oklahoma State Capitol to honor and celebrate their national championship.

"What an unbelievable honor to be recognized at the highest level," Gamblin said of the Evangels' visit to the capitol. "It was a special opportunity for our guys and we are extremely thankful for it."



"MAAC'S" CEREMONY

On April 25, the inaugural MAAC's athletic awards ceremony was held on the 50th floor of the Devon Tower in Oklahoma City. It was a night of elegance that celebrated the many achievements and accomplishments of our MACU student-athletes throughout the season.

The night concluded with Malcolm Mann, junior point guard of the MACU men's basketball squad winning the highest honor, the "Heart of Evangel" award. The "Heart of Evangel" award was given to the student athlete that best represents the university and athletic department in the areas of spiritual leadership, community involvement, as well as academic and athletic prowess.

Junior guard Devonse Reed was named the "Male Athlete of the Year", while women's basketball senior guard Kelli Tolar took home the "Female Athlete of the Year" honor.



5TH ANNUAL MACU GOLF CLASSIC

The 5th annual MACU Golf Classic was held May 10, 2016, at Lincoln Park Golf Course in Oklahoma City. Over half of the participants and sponsors who were a part of classic were new to MACU.

Thanks to the efforts of MACU coaches and the generosity of donors and sponsors, more than \$27,000 was raised to benefit general scholarships and athletic teams.

The 6th annual MACU Golf Classic will be held this fall on October 12, 2016, at Hidden Trails Country Club in Oklahoma City.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL
UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT 405-692-3191
OR GO TO GOLFCCLASSIC.MACU.EDU/**



YOUTH & COLLEGE ID SOCCER CAMPS

The 10th annual MACU Soccer Youth camp will be held June 20-23 and is designed for ages 5-16. The camp will run from 9 a.m. to noon each day and the cost is \$120 before June 13 and \$130 after.

Each camper will receive a T-shirt along with a free soccer ball, and is encouraged to bring a ball and wear shin guards.

There is also a College ID camp designed for high school and club players seeking to play at the collegiate level. This camp offers the opportunity to be showcased in front of multiple college coaches that are looking to bolster their roster for the upcoming season.

The women's College ID camp is from June 16-17, with the men's camp set for June 27-28.

All camps will be conducted on the MACU soccer field on campus.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL 405-692-3283 OR GO TO:

MACU YOUTH SOCCER CAMP:

WWW.MACU.EDU/2016SOCCERCAMP/

MACU COLLEGE ID SOCCER CAMP:

WWW.MACU.EDU/SOCCERCAMP/

STUDENT ATHLETIC AWARDS

WOMEN'S SOCCER

Kaci Power: SAC Player of the Week, NCCAA Player of the Week (Twice), OklahomaSports.Net Player of the Week, All-SAC, All-OklahomaSports.Net, NCCAA All-America

Kayla Baldwin: CoSIDA Academic All-District, NAIA Scholar Athlete, NCCAA Scholar Athlete, NCCAA All-Tournament, SAC Academic All-Conference

VOLLEYBALL

Hannah Luedtke: All-SAC, NCCAA All-Region, OklahomaSports.Net Player of the Week, CoSIDA Academic All-District, CoSIDA Academic All-America, NAIA Scholar Athlete, NCCAA Scholar Athlete, Top OklahomaSports.Net performance of November, SAC Academic All-Conference

Jenny Pratt: CoSIDA Academic All-District, NAIA Scholar Athlete, NCCAA Scholar Athlete, SAC Academic All-Conference

MEN'S SOCCER

Raphael Bonelle: SAC Player of the Week, All-SAC, All-OklahomaSports.Net, NSCAA All-America, NCCAA All-America

Tyler McIntosh: NCCAA All-America, NAIA Scholar Athlete, NCCAA Scholar Athlete, SAC Academic All-Conference

MEN'S GOLF

Jerry Miller: NCCAA Scholar Athlete

David Smith: NCCAA Scholar Athlete

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Kelli Tolar: NCCAA WBB Player of the Week, SAC, OklahomaSports.Net, NAIA Player of the Week, All-SAC, NCCAA Central Region Player of the Year, All-NCCAA Central Region, All-OklahomaSports.Net, OklahomaSports.Net's No. 5 performance of the 2015-16 season



VOLLEYBALL CAMPS

Mid-America Christian University volleyball head coach Mike Freeman and the University of Oklahoma volleyball head coach Santiago Restrepo are teaming up to host two-day volleyball camps on June 13-14 and also on June 15-16. The camps will be held inside the Gaulke Activity Center on the MACU campus.

The June 13-14 camps will feature 11-12 year olds from 9-11 a.m. and 2-4 p.m., while 13-14 year olds will go from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. and 4-6 p.m.

On June 15-16, the camps will be for 15-16 year olds from 9-11 a.m. and 2-4 p.m., with the 17-18 year olds going from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. and then 4-6 p.m.

The first 40 players per age group will be taken and the cost is \$125. Players will receive a free camp T-shirt with their entry fee.

In addition, for parents wishing to drop their campers off for the day, lunch and extended care will be provided for an extra \$25.

Current and former college coaches and players will be assisting with each camp.

TO SIGN UP, VISIT WWW.KAIZENVOLLEYBALL.NET

AND FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

KAIZENBOYSVB@YAHOO.COM OR CALL 405-410-9459.

Sarai Rodriguez: SAC, OklahomaSports.Net and NAIA Player of the Week, All-SAC, All-NCCAA Central Region, All-OklahomaSports.Net

D'Shala Culberson: SAC Player of the Week, All-SAC, OklahomaSports.Net's No. 8 performance of the 2015-16 season, NAIA Scholar Athlete

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Nick Tate: SAC, NCCAA, OklahomaSports.Net Player of the Week, SAC Co-Newcomer of the Year, All-SAC, OklahomaSports.Net NAIA Player of the Year, NAIA All-America

Devon Reed: All-SAC, All-OklahomaSports.Net, NCCAA Player of the Week, Chuck Taylor Most Valuable Player Award for NAIA National Tournament, All-NAIA Tournament

Dustin Welch: NAIA Scholar Athlete

Josh Gamblin: 2015-16 Rawlings NAIA National Coach of the Year

MACU MBB: Dr. James Naismith-Emil S. Liston Sportsmanship Award

SOFTBALL

Macie Crites: SAC Pitcher of the Week, CoSIDA (College Sports Information Directors of America) Academic All-District, All-SAC

Carson Osborne: NCCAA World Series All-Tournament Team

BASEBALL

Chevin Noone: NCCAA Field Player of the Week, CoSIDA Academic All-District

Junior Obeso: SAC and NCCAA Pitcher of the Week



DR. SHARON LEASE

AT MID-AMERICA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY, faith and education go hand-in-hand. For Academic Affairs Vice President Dr. Sharon Lease, that's the way it's always been.

Dr. Lease's passion for educating others began in the Peace Corps. She joined the volunteer program after graduating from Oklahoma City University with a bachelor's degree and spent two and a half years in service.

In Malaysia, Dr. Lease taught children and adults. She spearheaded a program to help teachers use English in all subjects. "It was revolutionary, very dynamic," she said. "It really helped shape my love of education, of teaching, of helping others, of service. I always wanted to be of service to others."

Her time in the Peace Corps also strengthened her relationship with God. "My religion became even more important to me," Dr. Lease said. "When you're close to God, you have that as your grounding. When things got bad, I knew I had Jesus with me."

She returned to the U.S. as an elementary and middle school teacher in Pennsylvania, but later moved to Guam to serve as coordinator of 28 guidance counselors and as principal of a large school. She spent an additional year in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, as a reading director.

Dr. Lease spent several years in Ahwaz, Iran, as an elementary and middle school guidance counselor and

principal. She said her family had to leave the country after the Iranian Revolution began in 1979.

"The entire educational system across the country was being shut down," Dr. Lease said. By the end of the year, her school, Passargard International, was the only one — out of both local and foreign institutions — still operating. Security concerns and increasing threats led to Dr. Lease and her husband, Ken, to have their children escorted out of Iran while they closed the school and traveled across the country to obtain a Pan American flight out of Tehran.

After touching countless lives across the globe, Dr. Lease and her husband decided to settle down in Oklahoma — Dr. Lease's home state — to raise their growing family. Dr. Lease focused her efforts on addressing Oklahoma's educational needs. She served as Assistant State Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent at the Oklahoma State Department of Education, as well as superintendent of the Western Heights school district in Oklahoma City.

"IT REALLY HELPED SHAPE MY LOVE OF EDUCATION, OF TEACHING, OF HELPING OTHERS, OF SERVICE. I ALWAYS WANTED TO BE OF SERVICE TO OTHERS."

Dr. Lease also left her mark on higher education. In addition to being an associate professor at California State University-Northridge, she served as an adjunct professor at the University of Oklahoma, the University of Central Oklahoma, Oklahoma City University and Southern Nazarene University.

On March 4, Dr. Lease's momentous contributions to education in Oklahoma and around the world were recognized at the 2016 Celebration of Education at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, where she was presented with a career achievement award.

Dr. Lease said she was "humbled" to be nominated for the award. It marks the difference she's already made in education and that she's continuing to make at MACU.

Student Engagement and Success Vice President Jessica Rimmer called Dr. Lease's career honor "well-deserved."

"God knew [what] we needed... when he gave us Dr. Sharon Lease," said Rimmer, who praised Dr. Lease as a "tremendous asset" to MACU.

"She brings a spirit of collaboration and an expectation of excellence to the work that she does with Academic Affairs. We are fortunate to have her as the leader of our academic division. She is a mentor and a

treasured friend to many of us who work with her on a regular basis."

Dr. Lease joined the Evangel family in September 2012 as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. She believes that the university is helping prepare students to learn even after they earn their degrees. "We're changing culture. We're doing something that's very important.

"[MACU teaches] students to adapt, to be flexible. As long as you're ready, you're going to be fine," Dr. Lease said. She said her time in the Peace Corps working with people of different learning styles and even different languages prepared her for the unknown. "That's what students face [today]," she said. "Technology is changing so rapidly, you have to be ready to change with it."

Dr. Lease said the greatest advice she could give students is to stay grounded in their belief in Jesus Christ. "Have that faith," Dr. Lease said. "You can overcome anything you need to to be successful."

DR. LEASE

receiving her award from Dr. Greg Garn, Dean of the Jeanine Rainbolt College of Education at the University of Oklahoma





EMCEE DINO LALLI
with MACU President

CONGRESSMAN COLE (R-OK)
accepting "Dream Maker" award from
MACU President Dr. John Fozard

WILD & SWEET
Performs at the inaugural
Dream Gala

DREAM SCHOLARSHIP GALA

NINETY PERCENT OF MACU STUDENTS receive some sort of financial assistance. It is through the generosity of donors that the university is able to make dreams of a college education come true. Those dreams and the promise of new ones were celebrated in an incredible night on April 8 when more than 275 guests, donors, sponsors, students and friends gathered for MACU's inaugural Dream Scholarship Gala.

University Advancement Vice President, Reverend Steve Seaton had many dreams of his own when he set out to create the spectacular night of fun and fellowship. Every one of those dreams, Seaton said, were realized. "The Lord was with us, we had a lot of favor," he said with a big smile.

The evening's festivities began with Dr. Mark Reighard playing piano at the reception. Emcee Dino Lalli, co-host and producer of Discover Oklahoma, hosted the event and talented musical group Wild & Sweet filled the walls of the Petroleum Club with their cross-genre blend of music.

In addition, MACU presented its first "Dream Maker" award to Congressman Tom Cole (R-OK), the evening's keynote speaker. President Fozard, who presented Congressman Cole with the award, spoke about a

2009 meeting in which he visited the congressman in Washington D.C. to ask for his support of MACU's teacher education program.

Due in part to Congressman Cole's support, MACU was recently identified as the first Christian University to be named to the Capital Urban Teacher Preparation Academy (UTPA). "Congressman Cole was very instrumental in helping MACU to be chosen as a member of this unique partnership with Oklahoma City public schools," said President Fozard. As part of UTPA, MACU joins the University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma State University and the University of Central Oklahoma.

"It was a tremendous opportunity for us to celebrate over 60 years at MACU and look toward the future," Seaton said. "Plans are already being made for the next Dream Gala. We hope to make it even bigger next year to help further our students' dreams for the future."



*Dream
Gala*

SAVE THE DATE

April 6, 2017 · 7:00 p.m.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT DREAMGALA.MACU.EDU/

JASON ROBINSON



YOU MAY HAVE SEEN Jason Robinson's smile beaming down at you as you cruise along the highway, as his picture is on several of MACU billboards, but Robinson's life wasn't always something to grin about.

After his father died, Robinson, then 18, was a lost soul. Ups and downs in his family life contributed to his hopeless feelings. Then, he found salvation in God and in MACU.

When he first visited the campus in 2010 on a coach's recommendation, Robinson felt instantly drawn to MACU.

Robinson didn't think he could attend school at a private university — indeed, it was through the generosity of donors that he received a scholarship and was able to spend four years as an Evangel. During his time at MACU, Robinson played basketball and fell in love with Emily Moore, a beautiful young woman who would become a schoolteacher and his bride. Robinson also reconnected with his estranged brother. Now, the two brothers are the best of friends.

It all made for a dream that Robinson never thought possible. "I came into college hesitant," he said. "I left grateful."

He shared his story at the inaugural Dream Scholarship Gala, where he moved the crowd to tears with his words of genuine thankfulness. With tears shining in his own

eyes, Robinson said the impact that someone had invested in him was "powerful," and that it had made an incredible difference in his life.

"MACU has been a blessing. It's so much more than just getting a degree," Robinson said of his college experience. "You really can develop life skills, passions, leadership opportunities and mature spiritually, while being loved and encouraged like nowhere else."

Robinson said MACU helped him prepare for his current career at Edward Jones. He said life has been "amazing" since his graduation in 2014. Robinson and his wife reside in Oklahoma City, where he works as a financial advisor and she teaches English at U.S. Grant High School. He still stays connected with MACU as part of the President's Roundtable and other events.

**"I CAME INTO
COLLEGE HESITANT.
I LEFT GRATEFUL."**

Robinson also works with Salt and Light to help train local Christian businesspeople and is actively involved with Earlywine Park YMCA.

Robinson gives all the glory to God for his life changing journey, but credits MACU with making him famous to those seeing his billboard.



MACU IN THE NEWS

AS AN EDUCATOR, Saeed Sarani said he has experienced many instances of disconnect among the community, academic offerings and strong workforce training needs. On May 4, he joined with Governor Mary Fallin and other Oklahomans to celebrate a big accomplishment helping to bridge that gap.

Here at MACU, Sarani is the Executive Director of Academic Assessment, Accreditation and Institutional Research. He assists with and focuses on many areas, including the Higher Learning Commission, program and student learning outcomes, surveys and various other assessment tools. His dedication to improving education extends across the state of Oklahoma.

Sarani serves as the President and Executive Director of CASMEO, a nonprofit organization dedicated to developing, administering and approving the procedures for Oklahoma school districts to establish a strong focus on STEM (Science-Technology-Engineering-Math).

His efforts with CASMEO were recognized May 4 at the State Capitol. The event celebrated State Bill 1181, which was signed by Gov. Fallin in 2014. As a result of that piece of legislature and Sarani's efforts with CASMEO, Mustang became the fifth STEM community in the state, joining Shawnee, Tulsa, Duncan and Lawton. In addition, Sarani said five other communities — including Oklahoma City and Moore — are "in the pipeline." Oklahoma City's expected STEM Community proposal should be submitted by June of 2016, he said.

Sarani, who has worked with CASMEO since 2012, stressed the importance of SB 1181. "It provides sustainable pathways for our citizens to become educated and productive members of our society while decreasing the number of imported workforce from other states or nations."

He said his work with CASMEO is fueled by his strong passion towards STEM education and his belief that there is a seamless alignment between STEM needs and workforce readiness. Sarani called CASMEO "pivotal" in setting forth a new era in Oklahoma's STEM offerings.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CASMEO, VISIT WWW.CASMEO.ORG/

Pictured above Rep. Leslie Osborn (R-OK), Mustang Mayor Jay Adams, President and Executive Director of Casmeo Dr. Saeed Sarani, Gov. Mary Fallin, Mustang Superintendent Sean McDaniel, Science Coordinator (Ret.) Gaile Loving, District Math Coordinator Denise Locke and Assistant Superintendent Angela Mills



AIRSTRIP REPAIR

MACU student missionaries and local villagers work together to restore a vital community asset

GIVING BACK TO MACU

During the summer months, most students return home to relax and enjoy the pause from their studies, take on a seasonal job, or spend time with family and friends. At MACU we have a special few who have chosen a different kind of summer break.

Dozens of our students are traveling throughout the nation and the world equipped with an irrepressible desire to witness for Christ. Some are serving as counselors in church youth camps across the United States. Others have recently returned from wading through the jungle community of Mashient, Ecuador, restoring a flood damaged airstrip to the village. Later this summer, another five students will travel to Kenya to drill water wells with the Water4 organization.

These MACU students have chosen to spend their summers selflessly serving the church and the Kingdom of God. These summer ministries impact lives and worlds around the globe, but they come at great expense to the sacrificial young men and women who are cultivating change for Christ. These students embrace the idea of a servant's heart. Not only do they put other's needs ahead of their own, they do so with the right motivation. They aren't working for awards, recognition, or even gratitude. They are working to live out true servanthood the way Jesus Christ did.

Together, we can make a difference in their lives the way they're making differences in the lives of others. We appreciate your overflowing love and support for our students through your prayers and faithful giving.



"Not only did I have the chance to travel around this beautiful country of ours, but I was also able to meet many people from different walks of life. Through this experience I made lasting friendships and was able to see lives changed and transformed through the Gospel of Jesus. The two summers I spent on camp teams changed me as a person and as a follower of Christ. I will forever hold these moments close to my heart. I am proud to have been able to represent MACU in such an incredible way."

MELISSA SALDAÑA

Senior, Bachelor of Science, Specialized Ministries

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT GIVE.MACU.EDU/

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WESLEYAN SCHOLARS
DR. CLIFF SANDERS AND
DR. WENDELL SUTTON

Eternal INVESTMENT

AFTER HER PARENTS DIED, Linda Nicholson set out to create something that would celebrate their life's work on a grand scale. "I thought, 'What could I do to honor them that would be bigger than me, something that will be lasting?'"

For her mother, Nicholson said the choice was easy. "She loved teaching," she said. "She got educated at a time when girls didn't get educated. She always said there wasn't a student alive that [she] couldn't teach to read."

Nicholson's mother taught Oklahoma schoolchildren for almost 40 years. In her honor, Nicholson created a scholarship for MACU students.

Because she didn't know any current MACU students, Nicholson trusted School of Teacher Education Director Esther Rehbein to find an education major worthy of her mother's legacy. But first, she had a wish list of seven requirements that she wanted the recipient to meet.

"The first three items on the wish list were unchangeable," Nicholson said. "No negotiations."

First, the recipient had to be an elementary education major. Secondly, she wished for the student to be a part of a Church of God congregation. Finally, the student had to have decent grades.

"That's when Miss Esther found Jessica," Nicholson said.

Jessica Downs, who is an Elementary and Secondary Vocal Music Education major, perfectly matched each of Nicholson's non-negotiable requirements. She was an education student, a part of a Church of God congregation and had achieved academic excellence during her time as an Evangel.

But that wasn't all.

"You see, I didn't tell them about the other four," Nicholson said, her eyes twinkling. In addition, there were four, smaller items – just wishes she never expected to come true.

"When [Esther] called and told me about the student she had chosen, she said, 'She's going to be a music teacher.'" After Rehbein asked if that was all right, Nicholson assured her, 'Yes, it was number four on my wish list.'

Rehbein went on to tell her that Downs was the daughter of a pastor. "You're not going to believe this," Nicholson told her, "but number five on my wish list was for her dad to be a pastor."

When she arrived at MACU on May 6 to present Downs with the scholarship, Rehbein wanted to know if there was a sixth item on the list. "That she would be from a small congregation," said Nicholson, "and she was."

"Number seven we failed on, because I said 'I wish she could be from Oklahoma,'" Nicholson laughed, "but I'll settle for Missouri."

Downs said she plans on keeping in contact with Nicholson through the remainder of education. She has already invited her to her senior music recital next spring.

One thing is for sure, Nicholson's parents would be honored by the legacy that will be carried on through the scholarship named in their honor and God's great ability to answer prayer and make our wishes come true.

If you would like information about how to make an eternal investment, contact the Office of University Advancement at give.macu.edu/



LINDA NICHOLSON
with scholarship recipient
Jessica Downs



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SAVE-THE-DATE

JUNE 10, JULY 8 & AUGUST 12: Evangel Days
JULY 7, AUGUST 11 & SEPTEMBER 15: CAGS New Student Orientation
JULY 12, AUGUST 16 & SEPTEMBER 20: CAGS Classes Begin
AUGUST 17: CAS (Traditional) Classes Begin



JUNE 13-16

Volleyball Camp

JUNE 20-24

Soccer Camp

JUNE 22

Alumni & Friends Reception
Anderson, IN