Alumni
GORDON CONWELL

Alumni Spotlight: Eliana Marques Runyon (MDiv ’04 & DMin ‘07)

Current title: Director of Finance and Administration at MIT, Co-Pastor at Woburn Foursquare Church, Director of Foursquare Theological Institute, & Board Member for the Praxis Center for Church Development

Family: Husband: John, Children: Christopher, Daniela

Favorite professor: Dr. Bill Spencer, Dr. Aída Spencer, & Dr. Eldin Villafañe

Favorite class: Biblical Greek

Favorite memory: Arriving tired at class on Saturday mornings and leaving—after hours of instruction—more energized than if I had been on vacation!

Please tell us more about your role in Administration and Finance at MIT.

As Director of Administration and Finance, I serve as the senior administrative and financial officer for the Technical Leadership and Communication (TLC) Programs in the MIT School of Engineering. There are four programs in the TLC—two for undergraduates and two for graduate students. I lead and provide oversight for business operations, human resources, finance, IT, facilities, and space planning. I have the privilege and responsibility to provide counsel and support to TLC Co-Directors and heads of programs on administration and policies. I develop and oversee budgets for the TLC programs, and I develop and manage strategic and operational plans and systems to ensure the TLC achieves its mission and goals. The role involves organizational, culture, and policy development. I also enjoy coaching staff and sharing with students the Strengths Finder assessment and materials as a Gallup certified Strengths Coach. I am so happy to serve in this role because it gives me the opportunity to work with a mixture of a lot of interests, skills, and talents that I have developed over the years.

How did God weave together your Gordon-Conwell education with other life events to bring you to where you are now?

God has made clear to me, throughout my Gordon-Conwell education journey, that there is no line dividing the work I do in church, or for para-church ministries, and the work I do outside the church. I am in full-time ministry even though I have a full-time job at MIT. The ministry of reconciliation, the ministry of carrying God’s presence, the ministry of bringing His peace (shalom) and establishing Biblical principles as I do life–

it's all the same. I believe God has really called us all to a whole being ministry unto Him in all that we do. In this way, as a daughter of God, who stewards His resources entrusted to me, be they time, money, talents, or influence, I am 100% his, and I work 100% as unto him. So, it doesn't matter where the income originates—whether it is from business, or employment, or church work.

A fun fact during my Gordon-Conwell student journey is that I met my husband at Gordon-Conwell. Shortly after I met John on the entrance steps of the Kerr building, we ended up teaching together. He was the teacher, and I was the teaching assistant for a class taught in Portuguese at CUME. It was a lot of fun and we started a friendship that evolved into us marrying our best friend.

At MIT I have worked in three different areas, in two schools, in the seventeen years I've worked there. I've learned a lot in each role and had quite a few promotions over the years.

In my denomination, the Foursquare Church, I've also had different roles. For a few years I was a regional superintendent over a group of churches, then John and I planted a church in Lynn, and in March 2020, in God's perfect timing, we became co-pastors of the Malden Foursquare Church, a church that ministers in the Portuguese language to a majority of Brazilian members. We had a wonderful adventure in 2024, a year when God fulfilled his promise to the congregation and provided a new building for us to meet in. We sold the property in Malden and purchased a new building in Woburn that better meets the needs of our congregation. God was leading that whole process, and we are so excited to live as a community, enjoying His favor and seeing His provision for us each day.

What are some things you love about your role there at MIT?

I love that I have autonomy to be creative and to develop and implement systems that increase the efficiency of the administrative work, in compliance with policies, and offer support to the great education students are receiving there.

I love being with people from so many places and backgrounds. The diversity in thought and in values is stimulating and makes me examine my walk with the Lord daily, to be a faithful witness in a way that is respectful and that mirrors Jesus' love for all.

I love that I can operate in areas where I've developed strengths and that I can contribute to the team with a common mission and vision. I do love the fact that I can stand behind the mission of the TLC and lend my support to it without any conflict with my faith.

What are the challenges of administration and finance in higher education in general, and in your context specifically?

There are many challenges, but I find those very attractive and exciting because they are looking for solutions! Administratively, there is the issue of technology developing so quickly. Over time better administrative systems are created and, for an institution as big as MIT, it takes a lot of effort to move from one system to another, so we might end up keeping some old ones for a while. Then some of those systems are not integrated, and it creates double work. Overall, there are particular populations who look at administration as a barrier to be ignored in order to do what they want to do. Fundraising is a constant activity, and we engage in it with enthusiasm because the final result is that those funds will support great work.

How has your Gordon-Conwell education served you in your work in higher education?

Lately, as I present the Strengths Finder material to undergraduate students and in a graduate class section, I lean heavily on my experience as an adjunct professor at Gordon-Conwell. I initially co-taught the Inner-City Ministry class with John, and then I translated Dr. Villafañe's material on Church and Community into Portuguese (with his permission). I taught it to CUME students and took it on the road to other states in the US and Jamaica.

Do you have any publications or links you would like to share?

- Contributed to "Biblical Equality among Pastoring Couples in the New England Portuguese District of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel" in Global Voices on Biblical Equality, Spencer, Spencer, Haddad, eds., Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008.
- The Foursquare Church in Woburn