Alumni

GORDON CONWELL

Alumni Spotlight: Gerald Hector (MACT ’17)

Current title: Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance at University of Central Florida

Family: Wife: Sharon-Kaye Hector, Children: Joshua, Timothy, and Kezia

Favorite professor: Dr. Garth Rossell

Favorite class: Reaffirmation Before and After the Reformation with Dr. Garth Rossel

A favorite memory: My favorite memory was when I was selected as Baccalaureate speaker for our graduating class in 2017. It was an honor and I still think about the message I shared given where our geopolitical issues are today.

Would you tell us about your role at the University of Central Florida?

I am the Chief Financial Officer for the university and oversee select administrative functions. I am the person who is entrusted with the books and finances of this 70,000-student body institution. It is the largest university in Florida and the second largest university in the United States.

How did you come to be serving in your current role and how did your time studying at Gordon-Conwell fit into that?

My Gordon-Conwell education expanded on my core beliefs in terms of deep integrity, honesty, treating individuals with respect, and being fair to everyone in terms of justice. It allowed me to deepen my Christian perspective and taught me to pray for those who seek to do me harm. Praying for them is not something I would have considered prior to my Gordon-Conwell journey. The fruits of the Spirit found in the fifth chapter of Galatians were honed while there at Gordon-Conwell.

My career in higher education happened by accident. When I graduated from Howard University, I went into public accounting with Deloitte and Touche. I specialized in independent power plants, but one of my other clients was the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). After a successful stint there, which included creating the financial framework for the first of its kind $1 billion Gates Millenium Scholars Program, the president of Johnson C. Smith University asked me if I would consider leaving UNCF to become her Chief Financial Officer. I accepted that offer when I was 33 years old and have been in this role since then. I have worked at Johnson C. Smith University, Ithaca College, Cornell University, Morehouse College, and now here at the University of Central Florida—all in senior financial and operational roles.

My time studying at Gordon-Conwell allowed me to bring into my workspaces, humility, a culture of excellence, and mindfulness of who I am wherever I go. I have always taken that light with me wherever my career has taken me. The preparation at Gordon-Conwell has also served me well because I had to learn that my true, authentic self

attracts both good and bad intentions from folks, and that I must still find the wherewithal to continue to be light even when my nature and flesh would respond differently. I cannot afford to have my light be dimmed. It is something that folks see and appreciate.

What do you love about the work you do?

I get to help shape the future leaders of our world in very key and unique ways. My role is to ensure that the organizations I serve remain financially solvent and vibrant for years to come.

What are the particular challenges of serving in the role of VP for Administration and Finance/CFO in general, and in your specific context?

The biggest challenge is that there are not enough resources to go around to meet all the needs that are out there. This is not only at my institution, but all institutions across the nation and world. Therefore, my job is to always seek ways to meet and exceed our students' expectations but do so in a fiscally responsible way. That requires a measure of transparency that is uncommon for a Chief Financial Officer, but I believe it is the best route to take because when folks don't know what is going on, they make stuff up—and that is not healthy for any organization. A big part of my job is to be an effective storyteller of what the numbers and operations mean to the campus and the community around it.

What has been Gordon-Conwell's biggest impact/influence on your current role or the way you engage in your role?

My Gordon-Conwell degree has afforded me the opportunity to serve my community well. I had a strong foundation from growing up in the community of Garveymeade back in Kingston, Jamaica, and also from having ministers always in my life from coaches to bosses, but Gordon-Conwell allowed me to learn more about what I believed from an academic perspective. I work at a public institution, therefore I must be careful of how I engage with my faith, but I have endeavored to always exhibit high integrity, perform excellent work while solving tough issues, and be a role model simply by the way I carry myself. The Gordon-Conwell aspect of this journey has been the biblical literacy that allows me to see through a spiritual lens the various contexts that I must operate within at work and at home. It also allows me to engage in conversations at a deeper level when individuals inquire concerning "there is something different about you."

Since you also serve on the Gordon-Conwell Board of Trustees, is there anything you would like to share with your fellow alumni from that vantage point?

Gordon-Conwell is a place where we are all taught the key underpinnings of our faith, and more importantly how to take that faith into the world in a non-threatening manner. The fact that the seminary is multi-denominational is a huge plus. In the world of work, the seminary prepares us to see how the issues we face are the same that Christ faced in some ways. The blessing is that we are also exposed to how best to operate from a Christian perspective, rather than simply matching energy for energy, be it good or bad. One could argue that we can gain those traits without a seminary education, but I would suggest that understanding the tenets of why we must operate in a certain way serves us better when we step into the marketplace and must perform with that ethos of a "culture of excellence." We need to ensure that Gordon-Conwell remains at the forefront of this training and preparation.

Do you have any publications or links to share?

- It's Easy 'Son', Quit Making Things Difficult: Lasting Life Lessons from a Coach and Mentor.
- The HBCU Nation Podcast, a spin off from my book, interviewing thought leaders, sports figures, higher education leaders, and so many more to explore their individual journeys to the positions they hold.