Alumni

GORDON CONWELL

Alumni Spotlight: John Runyon (MDiv ’99 & ThM ‘01)

Current title: Director, Faculty and Research Services at MIT

Family: Wife: Eliana, Children: Christopher and Daniela

Favorite professor: Dr. Douglas Stuart & Dr. Gordon Hugenberger

A favorite memory: Meeting my wife on the steps of Kerr

Please tell us more about your role in Faculty and Research Services at MIT.

I lead a small team that works in Faculty Affairs, and another small team that provides some shared research services for the faculty at the MIT Sloan School of Management. When I started at Sloan, neither of these groups existed, so it has been satisfying to build these teams over the years to pull together some essential services to the faculty that were spread throughout the organization.

How did you come to be serving in your current position?

I would say that it was my work experience of ten years in various administrative roles that prepared me mostly for the work at MIT, although I do spend a good bit of time listening to faculty and staff to help them solve various problems, not unlike pastoral counseling. I find that in this way I see my work at MIT and the church as seamless, really very similar, although one is focused on business education and the other on spiritual education. In both roles I work with people in navigating life issues.

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

I love the amazing people I have met. And I haven’t yet met one who hasn’t respected my faith—at least to my face. It’s a rich environment that has led to some amazing conversations, and I am blessed to be there.

What are the challenges of supporting faculty and in engaging in research in higher education in general, and in your context specifically?

The biggest challenge is always allocating resources in a way that seems fair and equitable, but leverages the best work, and providing services that are valuable to my colleagues. I want my work to make the place I work a better place, and a great experience for all. It’s difficult at times but rewarding to overcome the obstacles.

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

Any graduate education helps prepare one for roles like the one I have, but I feel uniquely prepared, not just from my prior administrative experience as I mentioned above, but also in working with people, bringing in principles of striving for excellence while maintaining grace and forgiveness in a way that also holds people responsible. It is fun work to practice the fruit of the Spirit and to consciously clothe oneself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience while working for excellence with all my heart (Col 3).

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

- "Blueprints for the Heart of the Rebuilder" in Reaching for the New Jerusalem: A Biblical and Theological Framework for the City, Park, Spencer, Spencer, eds., Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013.