Alumni

GORDON CONWELL

Alumni Spotlight: Paul Maurer (MDiv ‘89)

Current title: President & CEO at Montreat College

Family: Wife: Joellen, Children: four children and three grandchildren

Favorite professor(s): Dr. Roger Nicole, Dr. Christy Wilson, Dr. Gordon Fee

Favorite class: “How to Read the Bible for All It’s Worth” by Dr. Gordon Fee and Dr. Doug Stuart

A favorite memory: Sledding down the hill from the top of campus using lunchroom trays. We also had fun making Moses appear and disappear.

Please tell us more about your role as President at Montreat.

My priority is culture-building. This begins with identity. We are first and foremost a Christ-centered institution, and therefore a *theological* educational institution. Our identity as a college is rooted in our statement of faith and community life covenant. We ask all employees and trustees to affirm and support these documents as conditions of employment/trusteeship. They are the unifying documents of our college. To insure we build a culture consistent with these values, I interview every finalist for every full-time position. No exceptions. Having veto authority over all hiring decisions is something I learned and embraced during my first job in higher education twenty-five years ago. I take this charge and responsibility with utmost seriousness.

My second priority is the economic strength of my institution. As someone who answered a call to ministry, I have learned to embrace and grow into my role as CEO, recognizing that there is one person ultimately responsible for the economic viability/strength of the institution. I’ve also learned that my job is also Chief Urgency Officer. Thankfully, I have an innate sense of urgency. Obnoxious? Most definitely. Useful for my role as CEO? One hundred percent.

A final thought on leadership: I’ve learned from wise mentors that the best leadership and team building is rooted in consensus-building. This requires a commitment to humility and building trust. Secular thinkers often point to power and power dynamics. While these are understandable from a non-Christian worldview, power as a central dynamic runs counter to Jesus’ teaching on leadership. Committing to personal humility as a leader, and to building trust with your team, both take time and energy. Yet, the fruit is great.

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

I came to Gordon-Conwell with a sense of call, thinking the vehicle for that call was the pastorate. After Gordon-Conwell, I began to sense that perhaps there was another vehicle for my call: Christ-centered higher education, where I have served for more than twenty-five years. I arrived at Montreat in 2014 as an answer to that call. My education at Gordon-Conwell is fundamental to my work as a Christian college president. I draw on my Gordon-Conwell education every day. It gave me understanding as we re-wrote the college's statement of faith and created the community life covenant. My commitment to biblical orthodoxy was established during my years at Gordon-Conwell, and it informs every element of our identity at Montreat College. As the American higher education ecosystem is largely rooted in nihilism, we remain rooted in the eternal truths of Scripture. I believe the colleges that remain biblically rooted represent the finest educational institutions remaining in American higher education.

What are some things you love about serving as President there at Montreat?

I have the privilege of stewarding a miracle. Montreat College should have closed its doors a long time ago. We remain open because of a miracle of God. If you want to know more, see this article written by Sarah Zylstra at the Gospel Coalition, titled "The Montreat Miracle." The college continues to make progress toward a large vision.

What are the challenges of the President's role in general, and in your context specifically?

The biggest challenges are culture (as described above) and economics. Due to steep declines in birthrates in the U.S., there are, and will be for the foreseeable future, fewer 18-year-olds going to college. That means the competition for each student gets a bit harder each year, and that there are too many colleges. There have been dozens of college closures in the past few years, and this trend is likely to continue. It places pressure to persistently increase the value proposition of one's institution.

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

My Gordon-Conwell education was one of the most important parts of my preparation for a lifetime of ministry. I am immensely grateful for the outstanding education I received from some of the finest teachers and scholars anywhere. I use my theological education every day. My hope is that every president of a Christ-centered college would

have/seek a high-quality theological education, which I see as essential to our enterprise.

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

- The Code of Honor: Embracing Ethics in Cybersecurity—the book I co-authored on cybersecurity ethics at the request of the National Security Agency (NSA).
- Inside College Mergers—the chapter I contributed in the second volume.