

# FRONTLINES

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A WINDOW INTO AMERICA'S UNIVERSITIES

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FACULTY COMMONS—A CRU MINISTRY

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## Global Shift Spawns Opportunities

Rick Hove, Faculty Commons Executive Director



In an article in *The Washington Post*, Wes Granberg-Michaelson details the global shift of Christianity away from North America and Europe. A century ago 80% of Christians lived on these two continents, but now just 40%. “Today, the Christian community in Latin America and Africa, alone, account for 1 billion people.” And while it is difficult to assess, he estimates that “more Christian believers are found worshipping in China on any given Sunday than in the United States.” Wow.

Many scholars have documented this historic shift. God is powerfully at work around the world, particularly in Asia and the Global South—opening up new gospel opportunities in universities worldwide.

Professors have an extraordinary position of influence to lead the way for God’s work in the world during this global shift. Faculty

Commons’ new book, *A Grander Story*, is written for this very purpose, to invite Christian professors to invest their God-given talents to play a critical role in God’s work.

We are so encouraged to hear stories like these from around the world:

**Newcastle, Australia:** “Yes we are definitely interested in the book—good resources specifically targeting the encouragement and equipping of Christian academics are few and far between. I’ll see that copies get sent further afield to key academics in other institutions, rather than keeping them all to ourselves.”

**Jos, Nigeria:** “I am interested in starting Faculty Commons here in Nigeria. I have identified some professors and we shall be starting up together ... I had a meeting with two other professors to share the vision of FC with them and they plan to start a Christian faculty group. We will get the book to five universities, in different states.”

We know copies of *A Grander Story* are circulating throughout **Japan**, “**East Asia**” (secure location), “**Central Asia**” (another secure location), **Poland**, **Italy**, the **UK** and likely in additional countries as well.

None of this should surprise us. At the conclusion of Matthew’s gospel Jesus informs us: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Mt 28:18). He is the ruler of all heaven and earth. He has purposed to raise up “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages” to gather around the throne to praise Him forever (Rev 7:9). God is moving powerfully across the world.



## Help Cru Connect with College Bound Freshmen!

You could make all the difference in a new freshman potentially connecting to a Christian community when arriving on campus and making this important transition in life.

If you know students heading to college, enter their information at [www.cru.org/helpstudents](http://www.cru.org/helpstudents) and Cru will make every effort to connect them with Cru upperclassmen from their new school. If they are going to a campus without Cru, we will refer them to Campus Ministry Link for connection with a local church or ministry. †

Pray with us that God would use believing, missional professors greatly in His work as He builds His Kingdom globally. †

*Executive Director of Faculty Commons since 2005, Rick and his wife Sonya live in Durham, NC and have three adult children.*



Faculty Commons representative, Dr. Thomas Weakley, meets with Cru national leaders in Asia and discusses how to involve professors and business leaders in outreaches to universities and communities.

§2

## Avoiding the “Elijah Complex”

Ministry Profile: Earle and Cara Chute, Faculty Commons representatives, East Tennessee State University



“I didn’t know we had Christian professors on this campus!” This was the comment of a student at East Tennessee State University after attending a “What I Don’t Say in the Classroom” panel discussion by several Christian faculty members and staff. More than 100 students poured into the meeting room because they had heard that professors would be describing their faith stories.

Earle and Cara Chute, Faculty Commons representatives at ETSU, have organized discussion panels like this in conjunction with the Cru student ministry several times. Panelists tell their faith story and answer spiritual questions from students. “This is so great—I now know a Christian professor to talk to if I need it,” declared another student.

The Chutes transferred from the Cru student ministry to work with faculty at ETSU in 2008. They found that many faculty and staff felt alone as Christians on campus. Collaborat-

ing with their advisory board, the Chutes plan ministry opportunities that build an environment of inclusion, mutual support and ownership within the permanent academic community—professors and university staff.

Thinking that you are the only person in your environment who follows Christ can lead to discouragement, a skewed perspective, isolation, and hesitancy to step out in faith. Elijah faced this dilemma in 1 Kings 19 when he cried to God, “I am the only one left.” It’s the Elijah Complex.

“When I discovered the Faculty Commons group, I realized I was not the only believer

here ... and that was huge!” explained Dr. Don Good, Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. “My understanding of personal ministry and my spiritual influence were broadened as I became more involved with Faculty Commons.” Dr. Good welcomes the chance that the discussion panels provide to interact on important spiritual matters with students.

Ms. Kimberly Maturo, Information Research Tech in the College of Nursing, explained, “Having the opportunity to participate in the panel presentation gave me an opportunity to trust the Lord in speaking out about my faith

and to be used by Him to share His love for me and others.”

The faculty and staff who participate in Faculty Commons discover that there are other people who follow Christ on campus—who serve Him faithfully—whom God is using and enabling to fulfill His purpose. Because the Chutes plan outreaches like this panel discussion, professors, staff, and students have all realized that they are not alone—that God has provided many at ETSU who follow Christ, and He is using them to get His work done there. Christian community can be a powerful cure for the Elijah Complex! †

### East Tennessee State University

ETSU is a public university that was founded in 1911 with 29 students. Now, offering a host of programs that benefit both the region and nation, ETSU consistently ranks as one of the top schools nationwide for rural medicine and primary care education.

- Over 14,500 undergraduate, graduate and professional students
- 140 undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral degree programs
- Its Quillen College of Medicine was founded in 1974
- A privately funded College of Pharmacy opened in January ‘07
- Has nationally acclaimed program in Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music and the nation’s lone master’s degree in Storytelling
- Notable alumni include country music star Kenny Chesney
- The Buccaneers compete in the NCAA Division I Southern Conference



East Tennessee State University Charles C. Sherrod Library



# Passing the Torch

Faculty Profile: Dr. John Walkup, Professor Emeritus of Electrical and Computer Engineering and Faculty Commons representative, *Texas Tech University*



When John Walkup was a homesick freshman at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, he longed for a spiritual mentor. A new Christian, he was a continent away from his family and friends in Seattle.

Figuring out how to live the Christian life in a competitive and secular environment was a difficult task. "I hoped that at least one of my professors would identify himself as a believer," he says. "None ever did."

Five years later, John entered graduate school at Stanford. There he found the spiritual mentors he needed. A few of his professors identified themselves as followers of Christ; one even hosted a weekly Bible study for students. "Their examples played a major

role in my decision to embark upon an academic career," John explains.

During his 27-year-long career as a professor of electrical engineering at Texas Tech University, John was determined to be for his own students the mentor he had longed for at Dartmouth. He began each semester by identifying himself as a Christian in each of his classes.

And he looked for Christian students to whom he could pass on what he had learned from his Christian professors at Stanford. One of these students was Bob Marks, now a professor of electrical and computer engineering at Baylor University.

Like John at Dartmouth, Bob was a new Christian when he arrived at Texas Tech to earn his PhD under John's advisorship. "John served as an ideal mentor spiritually, intellectually, and by example," Bob says. "As with

many others of his students, the impact on me was deep and long-lasting."

One of the most important things Bob learned from John was how to share Christ's love with students without abusing the vertical authority of the professor-student relationship. "Inappropriately approached, there can potentially be awkwardness between Christian professors and their students," Bob explains.

But John, he says, "always listened more than he talked." This often led to the student opening the door for spiritual conversations. As he watched John, Bob was taking mental notes: "This, I remember thinking, is the way professors should interact with students."

Bob also internalized John's teaching that worldly accomplishments pale in comparison to the investments he would make as Christ's ambassador on his campus. "John and I have co-authored 19 publications together," Bob notes. "They sit somewhere on servers or dusty library shelves and are rarely read anymore, if at all."

The optics research program that John had built at Texas Tech met a similar fate. Two years after John took an early retirement to join the staff of Faculty Commons, the program was terminated and his lab was dismantled.

But the investments John and Bob have made in the spiritual lives of their students and colleagues continue to bear fruit. In 1999, John moved back to the San Francisco Bay area, where he and his wife mentor faculty and graduate students at Stanford, University of California Berkeley, and San Jose State.

John tells these professors: "My lasting

legacy is not the papers I published or the NSF, DOD, or NASA grants and contracts I received. It is the impact I have had for Jesus Christ on the lives of my students and colleagues."

Dr. Bob Marks agrees whole-heartedly. "John's legacy illustrates the lasting impact professors can have in Christ's kingdom. In the end, it's the only thing that lasts. John taught me that." †



Dr. John Walkup speaks at Faculty Commons' A Common Call regional conference for professors and graduate students, giving them a vision for how God can use them in academia.

## Join with us in Prayer

"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest." – Matthew 9:37-38

1. Pray for the millions of college freshmen arriving on campus soon—that they will come to know Jesus in college and serve him for a lifetime.
2. Pray that Christian professors will wisely and winsomely identify as Christ-followers as they introduce themselves to students at the start of this new school year.
3. Pray that God will continue to spread our book, *A Grand Story*, to professors all over the world.
4. Pray that recent discussions regarding freedom of speech (that have even reached the US House of Representatives) will result in Christian professors being able to appropriately speak from a Christian perspective at universities across the country (Colossians 4:3).

# God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible

Book review by John Karraker, Faculty Commons representative, *University of Central Florida*

Last Christmas Day my wife and I decided to attend an afternoon showing of the new Star Wars movie. Unfortunately, we arrived late to the film and missed the first five minutes. Plus, we had to sit in the front row on the extreme right of the screen.

Having missed the beginning of the action, we had a hard time figuring out who was who and what was what. That, plus the bad viewing angle made the whole film confusing.

A few months later we had a chance to rent the film and watch it from the beginning—and without the sideways distortion. What a dif-

ference. We found ourselves cheering for the heroes and despising the villains. Finally, the ending made sense!

Our experience with this film is much like what many people experience with the Bible. They enter the action late and can't make out the good guys from the bad guys. The angle they have on the action makes no sense. No wonder so many lose interest before the Scriptures have a chance to change their lives.

For this reason, Vaughn Roberts' *God's Big Picture* should be a welcome addition to anyone's library. Written for a lay audience, Roberts applies an eight-episode schematic to describe and encompass biblical history. While all schemes (even this one) have their difficulties, *God's Big Picture* provides a practical way to take in the Bible's own storyline.

Roberts helps his readers make sense of the characters and the events by describing the wider context of the whole Bible. More importantly, by viewing biblical history as a display of the work of redemption, the reader is very quickly able to see the Christ-centeredness of the biblical narrative. It is Jesus and the salvation offered through him that binds the Bible together.

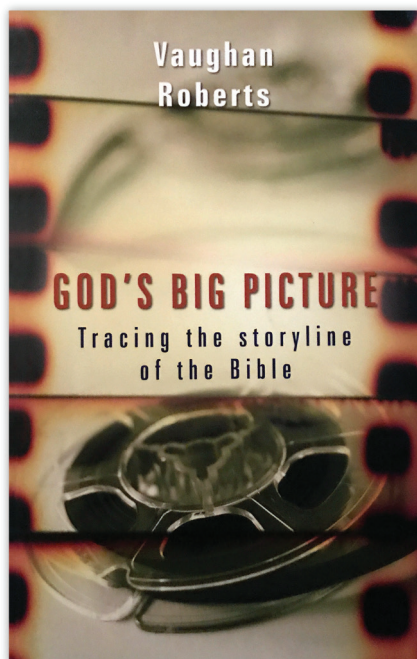
Roberts defines the kingdom as God's people, in God's place, under God's rule and blessing. Thus, the eight episodes of the kingdom begin with "The Pattern of the Kingdom" as Adam and Eve (God's people), in the Garden (God's place), living in perfect harmony and obedience (under God's rule and blessing).

Then the "The Perished Kingdom" is set in

motion in Genesis 3 with Satan's deception and humankind's first disobedience. This epoch continues until Genesis 12 when the "The Promised Kingdom" is inaugurated.

And so it goes: "The Partial Kingdom" and "The Prophesied Kingdom" round out the Old Testament, followed by "The Present Kingdom" (because the Jesus the King is now present), "The Proclaimed Kingdom," and "The Perfected Kingdom" completing the New Testament.

*God's Big Picture* can function as a companion to Faculty Commons' new resource for Christian professors, *A Grand Story*. The grand narrative of Scripture spans all of time and makes sense of our lives and world history. We ourselves are to enter God's big picture wholeheartedly so that we can live as part of God's story, rather than pursue a lesser "story" such as a career built solely around an academic reputation or resume. Roberts' book narrates this ultimate story in a wonderful way. †



## Investing in the Mission

Your financial investment will help us build movements of professors and students to take the hope of Jesus Christ to the world. Will you prayerfully consider partnering with us in this vital endeavor? All contributions to Faculty Commons are income tax deductible.

### Cash donations

Make check payable to Cru and mail to Faculty Commons; 2001 W. Plano Parkway, Suite 2700; Plano, Texas 75075. Or invest online: [give.cru.org/2271527](http://give.cru.org/2271527)

### Maximize your giving to help reach the world for Christ

Stocks, bonds and mutual funds held for at least a year, which have increased in value since the time purchased, will receive extra tax savings when used as a donation.

### Donor Advised Funds

You can make a gift of cash or appreciated assets into a Donor Advised Fund, receive an immediate tax deduction, then plan for future giving. The Cru Foundation can show you the tax and cash flow benefits.

If you need assistance, please contact our Director of Ministry Development, Rich McGee at 214-727-6084 or [rich.mcgee@facultycommons.org](mailto:rich.mcgee@facultycommons.org).



A higher standard. A higher purpose.

### Support Faculty Commons Representatives

As part of Cru, all of our staff trust God for their salary and ministry expenses. You can contribute to individual staff at [give.cru.org](http://give.cru.org) by typing their names in the search box.

## Fast Facts:

In April, a *Louisiana State University* computer science professor spoke to Italian students at the University of Bologna and shared how Jesus had changed his life.

Twenty *U. of Penn* professors and staff met to discuss our book, *A Grand Story*, and the reality that "the university will likely become your god" if Jesus isn't.

In an email exchange to get to know new students, a professor at *UW-Eau Claire* notices if anyone identifies as a Christian, then tells them he follows Christ also.

While meeting with a Faculty Commons representative, a new *MIT* professor wanted to know the implications for this life if there were to be life after death.



FACULTY COMMONS  
A Cru Ministry

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