

## Life Skills

### An Interview with Dr. Nido R. Qubein, President, High Point University

**EDITORS' NOTE** *Dr. Nido Qubein became the seventh president of High Point University in January 2005. He has served as past president of the Big South Conference and teaches a class to all freshmen titled, "The President's Seminar on Life Skills." In this course, Dr. Qubein shares with students the habits, skills, values, and practical intelligence that one must apply to succeed in an ever-changing world. The author of 11 books, Dr. Qubein received an associate degree in business from Mount Olive College, a bachelor's degree in human relations from High Point University, and a master of science in business education degree from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Bryan School of Business & Economics. In 2009, he was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Letters in Humanity degree from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.*



Nido R. Qubein

#### What have been the keys to High Point's success and how do you define the High Point difference?

High Point University is the Premier Life Skills University. We don't focus on the "product" – the diploma. We focus on the product of the product – a life filled with meaningful success and framed with purposeful significance. At High Point University, we are focused on rendering value for our graduates. When students complete their education here, we want them to possess not only the technical

skills needed to launch their career, but the life skills needed to navigate and continuously grow their career.

High Point University is a values-based institution, grounded in hard work, personal initiative, generosity, gratitude, faith and more. Parents spend their lives modeling values for their children. When they send their students to a university, they want it to uphold and further those values. When students choose a university, they want an institution that will serve as an extension of their home. Of course, values can't be taught. They can only be modeled. We have built a

culture that celebrates those values. It's in the air at High Point University, and it is the most consistent praise we hear from students and parents – that we've dared to build an environment and foster a culture where students choose to be extraordinary.

#### What excited you about the opportunity to lead High Point University and how valuable has your experience and expertise in the private sector and in business been to your impact and accomplishments leading the University?

I saw an opportunity to plant seeds of greatness in the minds and hearts of young people who would go on to become leaders in our world. When I first arrived, HPU was what one journalist called a "dusty old college." I saw its potential to be a differentiator in the world of higher education. I wanted to take HPU from an ocean of sameness to a much smaller lake of differentiation, as I had helped major corporations do that in my business career. With a phenomenal group of faculty and staff, we rolled up our sleeves and got to work. We didn't just think outside the box – we threw the box outside the window. This is sometimes hard to do, especially in higher education where so many small colleges have traditionally operated by the same formula.

**UNIVERSITY BRIEF** *Founded in 1924, High Point University (highpoint.edu) is a 97-year-old liberal arts institution located in the Piedmont Triad region of North Carolina. At High Point University, every student receives an extraordinary education in an inspiring environment with caring people. "America's Best Colleges" 2019 Edition, published in the U.S. News & World Report, ranks HPU #1 among all regional colleges in the South (the seventh consecutive year at #1). It also ranked HPU for the fourth consecutive year as the #1 Most Innovative Regional College in the South for innovative improvements in terms of curriculum, faculty, students, campus life, technology or facilities. HPU was named, for the tenth consecutive year, to the national "Colleges of Distinction" list. HPU also earned Fields of Study distinctions for the Phillips School of Business and the Stout School of Education. High Point University has been named one of the nation's top institutions for undergraduate education by The Princeton Review. HPU is recognized in "The Best 386 Colleges: 2021 Edition" for its academic programming, as well as positive survey responses and feedback from students, parents, and higher education leaders across the country. In addition to including HPU in "The Best 386 Colleges," the new Princeton Review rankings also names HPU as one of the top 20 universities in the nation for Best Dorms (#1), Most Beautiful Campus (#9), Best Career Services (#19) and Most Active Student Government Association (#19).*



Students on the HPU campus



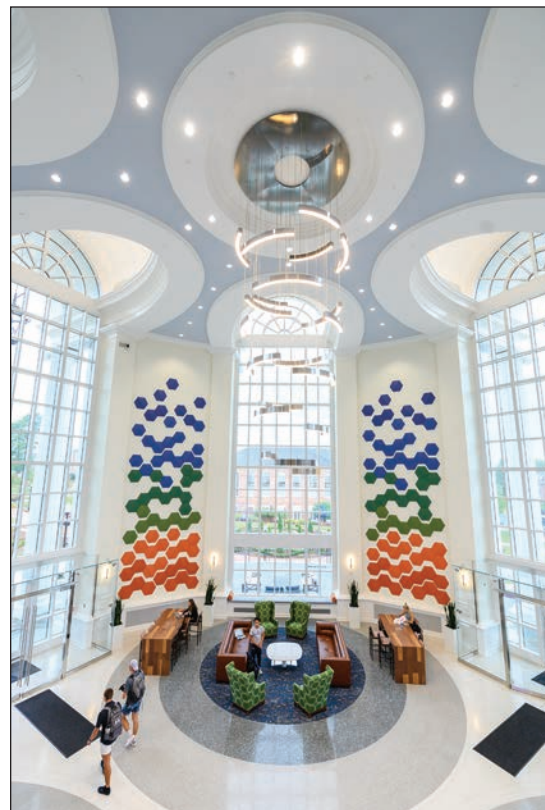
R.G. Wanek Center at High Point University exterior (above) and Wanek School of Natural Sciences lobby (below)

Now, look at where HPU is today. *U.S. News & World Report* has named HPU #1 Best Regional College in the South for 9 consecutive years, #1 Most Innovative for 6 consecutive years and is among the nation's Leading Top 50 First Year Experiences. HPU has also been included in *The Princeton Review's* "America's Best Colleges" for four consecutive years, where HPU is also ranked #1 for Best Dorms, #9 for Most Beautiful Campus, #19 for Best Career Services and #19 for Most Active Student Government Association.

**How has High Point adapted its work to address the challenges caused by the pandemic and how critical has it been for you to be in regular communication with faculty, students and families during this uncertain time?**

Innovation is in High Point University's DNA, as you will see from the continual transformation taking place on our campus. While the global pandemic in general was entirely unprecedented and unpredictable, HPU faculty and staff are always willing to change and adapt in order to best serve our students. I immediately commissioned a Health and Safety Task Force in the spring of 2020. They went to work meeting numerous times a week and prepping our campus. We communicated with parents at least weekly, but often several times a week. We committed several million dollars over the summer to address public health safety on campus which reassured students and their parents. We have remained in touch with students and parents since the onset of the pandemic in mid-March of last year.

After every college and school across the country switched to remote learning in March 2020, HPU received an overwhelming request from parents and students to resume in-person learning. We prepared our campus and resumed in-person learning successfully in July 2020 with Summer Advantage and Summer Session II classes, again in the fall 2020 semester, and now in the spring 2021 semester. Our safety protocols are working and our



students and parents send us letters of gratitude for the impactful in-person and experiential learning experience HPU provides.

**What do you see as High Point University's responsibility to the community it serves and how is the University engaged in the community?**

Our city is a big part of our spirit and our heart. We will always be High Point's university, and High Point will always be our home. For this reason, we volunteer 110,000 hours every year with at least 40 local agencies and students participate in dozens of service learning courses that disperse them throughout the city to lend a helping hand. In

addition to service, I have raised \$63 million from private donors to build projects to bring visitors downtown year-round, including the new downtown ballpark known as Truist Point, an events center, a children's museum and a park.

**How critical is it for High Point University to build a diverse and inclusive environment within its faculty and student population and will you discuss these efforts?**

We at High Point University are committed to being an institution focused on diversity and inclusivity and a place framed with love and unity. In 2019, as part of the University's next 10-year growth plan, I announced HPU is investing \$700 million in scholarships focused on first generation students, diversity, academic excellence and veterans. In recent years, HPU has also created positions for a Director of Multicultural Affairs and Assistant Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion. In the Office of Student Life, we work to provide cultural programming in partnership with our student clubs and other departments. There is a long list of diversity initiatives and programming on our campus.

HPU is a values-based institution, grounded in hard work, personal initiative, generosity, gratitude, inclusivity, faith and more. We are not a perfect school - there is no such thing. We must always do more, and we are committed to continually building an environment that fosters a culture where all students can choose to be extraordinary.

**What do you see as the keys to effective leadership and how do you describe your management style?**

Leaders strive to create capacity in others. For students, I teach a class to all freshmen titled, "The President's Seminar on Life Skills," sharing the principles, skills and values that one must apply to succeed in an ever-changing world. I remind faculty and staff on campus, "We live, students watch, and students learn," because students are paying attention to our actions. They need heroes, models and mentors to positively influence their lives and actions. You have to live the example for them to follow.

**What advice do you offer to graduates beginning their careers during this difficult and unprecedented time?**

We live in a world where you must be able to adapt and embrace change. While the marketplace has changed and experienced turmoil due to the global pandemic, there are always opportunities available for those who are willing to work hard. HPU is intensely focused on equipping students with life skills because these are the skills that will outlast technical changes and marketplace disruptions. A C-suite survey conducted by High Point University with executives from 500 organizations with more than 5,000 employees clearly said that new hires need motivation, emotional intelligence and coachability more than they need technical competence to be successful. My advice is to actively grow and show employers that you possess these life skills and are ready to render value to their team. That's what HPU graduates do, and that's why 97 percent of our Class of 2020, who graduated as the pandemic was causing hiring freezes and uncertainty, were employed or in graduate school within six months of earning their HPU degree. ●