

Choose To Be Extraordinary

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. Since that time, enrollment has quadrupled, campus has expanded from 90 to 520 acres, and academic schools have grown from 3 to 14. Qubein came to the United States as a teenager with limited knowledge of English and only \$50 before going on to build business partnerships in banking, real estate, publishing, and retail businesses. Prior to his role as HPU President, Qubein rose to prominence as an internationally known author and consultant who has given more than 7,500 presentations worldwide. He has served on the corporate boards of several Fortune 500 companies including Truist, the sixth largest bank in the nation, La-Z-Boy, and FinThrive Healthcare. Qubein is also executive chairman of the Great Harvest Bread Company. Among numerous honors and recognitions he has received, Qubein is an inductee of the Horatio Alger Association for Distinguished Americans, along with Oprah Winfrey and Colin Powell.



Dr. Nido R. Qubein

What have been the keys to High Point University's growth and leadership?

At High Point University, we are laser focused on the personal and professional transformation of our students. Everything is built around that. College should be more than just obtaining a diploma. An extraordinary, holistic education should be about professional development and personal transformation as well.

Our campus is a physical manifestation of this. HPU has more than quadrupled the size of campus, more than tripled enrollment, and grown from three to 14 academic schools. But the outcomes of our students and the success they achieve after graduation are the results of a transformational learning environment.

As a university president, I believe that leadership should always be forward thinking. It must be realized fully through the prism of the long-term, future view. We are growing thoughtfully and meaningfully on merit and by design. HPU has grown not only in our number of students, but in the academic programs we

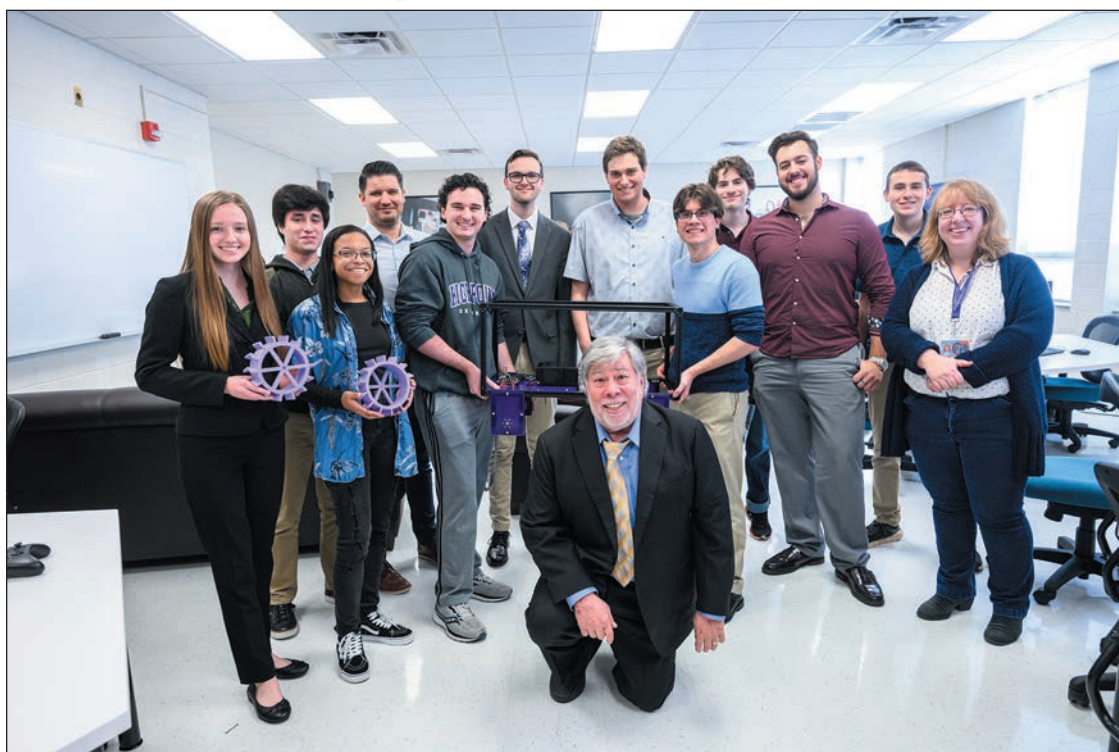
offer. HPU has launched several new schools in nursing, optometry, dental medicine, law, and entrepreneurship. We are attracting students from across the nation and the world.

As a leader, you can't do it alone. You have to create capacity. You lead by developing and bringing out the best in others by entrusting them with tasks and responsibilities that will stretch them and help them grow. Do that and whomever you lead will thrive. I've seen that happen. So has my friend, Dr. John Maxwell, the #1 leadership speaker in the world and the Executive Coach in Residence at High Point University, one of dozens of thought leaders mentoring students in our Access to Innovators program. Here's what Maxwell told me a few months ago: "I tell people that leadership is all about influence, and they ask me how they can increase their influence. I tell them to intentionally add value to people on a daily basis. The moment you intentionally add value to people, they begin to influence you."

How do you define HPU's culture and values?

At HPU, students learn that their values are the foundation on which they stand. On

UNIVERSITY BRIEF Founded in 1924, High Point University (highpoint.edu) is a liberal arts institution located in the Piedmont Triad region of North Carolina. "America's Best Colleges" 2024 Edition, published by U.S. News & World Report, ranks HPU #1 among all regional colleges in the South (the twelfth consecutive year at number one). It also ranked HPU for the ninth consecutive year as the #1 Most Innovative Regional College in the South for innovation in curriculum, faculty, students, campus life, technology, and facilities. HPU was named for the thirteenth 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. The Princeton Review named High Point University as one of the nation's top institutions for undergraduate education. The Princeton Review also named HPU in the 2024 edition of "The Best 389 Colleges" and on the Best Southeastern Colleges "2024 Best Colleges: Region by Region" list. HPU was also recognized among the Top 20 in the nation for Best-Run Colleges, Best Career Services, Most Beautiful Campus, Most Active Student Government Association, Best College Dorms, and Best Campus Food, as well as a Great School for Business/Finance Majors and a Great School for Communication Majors.



Through HPU's Access to Innovators program, dozens of global leaders like Apple Co-Founder Steve Wozniak (pictured center above), who serves as HPU's Innovator in Residence, regularly mentor students on campus



Cameron Scott (center), HPU graduate and MLB executive, at HPU's Presidential Scholar Program Weekend

In the First-Year Seminar on Life Skills that I teach for all freshmen, I share with our students that life is about both success and significance. I always tell them that applying your talents without thinking of your values and principles is like using your car's accelerator without touching the steering wheel.

Will you discuss HPU's focus and commitment to teaching life skills and how this focus is at the heart of HPU's mission?

High Point University is the Premier Life Skills University. Beyond the diploma, HPU students embrace a growth mindset, understanding that talent and abilities can be developed through hard work, learning new strategies and collaborating with others.

High Point University's Survey Research Center has twice surveyed C-suite executives nationwide to find out what they want in their future hires and what traits, characteristics and attitudes they see in their current employees that make them successful. These executives lead businesses with anywhere from 5,000 to 25,000 employees, and the answers they gave us are resounding. But what we discovered is what I expected. The skills needed to succeed never change. We all need team players, people who

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their earliest visits to campus, I tell parents and students that HPU is grounded in values – hard work, personal initiative, generosity, gratitude, faith, and more. Parents spend their lives modeling values for their children. When they send their student to a university, they want it to uphold and further those values. And when students choose a university, they want an institution that will serve as an extension of their home.

Our culture promotes the values of generosity, gratitude, hard work, personal initiative, and joy, among others. Values such as these built our nation, and we ensure students live in an environment that models those same values. Values cannot merely be taught; they must be modeled for students. I remind our faculty and staff that we live, students watch and students learn.

The values of God, family and country are clearly embraced on our campus. American flags fly next to sculptures of bald eagles and historical thought leaders, with quotes inscribed in sidewalks. You'll find these words there from Roy E. Disney, son of co-founder Roy O. Disney and nephew of Walt Disney of The Walt Disney World Company: “When your values are clear, making decisions becomes easier.”



Charlie Freeman, HPU's Sports Business Executive in Residence, mentors students



HPU students gaining experience by participating in summer undergraduate research

High Point University. Like David, HPU has an entrepreneurial mindset.

The David S. Congdon School of Entrepreneurship will be North Carolina's first private school of entrepreneurship and one of only two in the state when it opens in 2025. Here's what is unusual about the School of Entrepreneurship: It will not be starting from an embryonic stage. We already have programs, including a department of entrepreneurship. From day one, this school will have hundreds of students. It is part of the next major wave of growth on our campus, which is well underway with a \$400 million investment in academic expansion and construction projects supported by \$100 million in gifts from three generous families. On the Innovation Corridor, construction has begun on the Workman School of Dental Medicine and Kenneth F. Kahn School of Law. HPU's Innovation Corridor also houses the Congdon School of Health Sciences and Fred Wilson School of Pharmacy. By creating a centralized hub for graduate education, HPU students will benefit from interdisciplinary learning by connecting and collaborating with each other.

Clearly, we have intentionally launched new schools that graduate the type of leaders the world needs.

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are coachable, communicate well, collaborate always and are never afraid to say, “We can figure that out.” I call these life skills.

At HPU, we educate our students not only on the important subject matter in the classroom, but just as importantly, on how they must embrace an optimistic attitude, develop a growth mindset, and engage in constant learning to best apply their technical knowledge. This is what is required to thrive in the world as it's going to be.

What was the vision for creating a new School of Entrepreneurship at HPU?

The addition of a School of Entrepreneurship was announced in 2022 along with schools of law, nursing, and optometry – bringing HPU to 14 academic schools, up from just three in 2005 when I accepted this position as president of my alma mater.

HPU recently received a substantial and generous 8-figure gift from my longtime friend, David S. Congdon, executive chairman of Old Dominion Freight Lines Inc., one of the nation's leading transportation companies. It is a mammoth undertaking to begin an academic school at a university. We are grateful for David Congdon's spirit of generosity and advocacy for



Qubein Center at High Point University

Will you provide an overview of the curriculum?

HPU has embraced incorporating “FIO” skills, or figure-it-out skills, throughout our curriculum. We attract many forward-thinking students with creative, entrepreneurial minds. For more than a decade, our students have pitched their business ideas to a panel of judges and earned thousands of dollars in start-up funds during the annual Business Plan Competitions and Elevator Pitch Competitions. The Elevator Pitch Competition is also part of HPU’s Global Entrepreneurship Week, an international initiative that introduces entrepreneurship to young people across the globe.

HPU is also a place that attracts global entrepreneurs who have changed the world. As a few examples, Netflix Co-Founder Marc Randolph serves as HPU’s Entrepreneur in Residence and Apple Co-Founder Steve Wozniak serves as HPU’s Innovator in Residence. They visit campus to work closely with students and guide them on how to launch and grow their businesses. What other university can say that?

Entrepreneurship and innovation are the #1 ways to impact any global economy, according to HPU’s Intellectual Property Expert in Residence, JiNan Glasgow George. Our students will benefit from HPU opening the School of Entrepreneurship instead of simply making entrepreneurship a major within our business school. With its interdisciplinary and business foundational approach, this new school will equip students with the life skills and mindset to start their own businesses and create economic opportunities and social value.

The School of Entrepreneurship will offer multiple undergraduate degree options, starting with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in Entrepreneurship, a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in Sales, a Bachelor of Arts in Event Management, and a Bachelor of Arts in Hospitality Management.

HPU has also developed a School of Nursing. Will you highlight the School of Nursing and the impact that it will have for HPU?

High Point University has an excellent reputation for establishing undergraduate and graduate-level degrees in healthcare education, and the School of Nursing is a continuation of our commitment to prepare graduates for the world as it will be. The School of Nursing joins the Congdon School of Health Sciences, the Fred Wilson School of Pharmacy, and the Workman School of Dental Medicine on our campus, with more programs and schools in development, including the School of Optometry.

Dr. Racquel Ingram, an Amy V. Cockcroft Nurse Fellow in Nursing Leadership with 26 years of nursing experience, is leading the School of Nursing as its founding dean. She has 23 years as a nurse educator with expertise in nursing curriculum and program development and 19 years of nursing leadership. Dr. Ingram joined HPU’s Congdon School of Health Sciences in 2021 as founding chair and assistant professor for the Department of Nursing, where she worked to lay the groundwork for a nursing

curriculum along with Drs. Daniel Erb, provost, and Kevin Ford, dean of the Congdon School of Health Sciences. The Bachelor of Science in nursing program welcomed its inaugural class in fall 2022.

Establishing a school of nursing provides opportunities for HPU to develop additional undergraduate and graduate-level programs. Since joining HPU, Dr. Ingram has assembled a staff of nurse educators who are committed to excellence and interdisciplinary care.

Students learn in a 50,000-square-foot state-of-the-art nursing complex that includes a 16-bed skills lab with 14 diverse simulators modeling an acute care environment, as well as three high-fidelity simulation suites for adult health, pediatric and maternal/newborn care.

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Under your leadership, HPU continues to innovate and expand its offerings for its students. Where do you see additional opportunities for growth for HPU?

We remain committed to transforming the lives of our students and preparing them for the world as it will be. When we first set out to build a transformational university, we paid attention to the demands and opportunities of the global marketplace. In a world where technical skills inevitably become obsolete faster than ever, we knew our students needed the latest technology but also much more. They needed life skills.

HPU has established itself as The Premier Life Skills University. We have built an ecosystem of support to ensure students experience meaningful guidance throughout their educational journey. Every freshman has a professional success coach who either specializes in their major or assists students who have yet to declare their field of study.

Our Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Works has introduced a Research Rookies program that encourages freshmen to prepare for high-level research with a faculty advisor as soon as they arrive, rather than waiting until they are upperclassmen.

A community of career advisors, study abroad advisors, peer mentors, and others support the holistic growth of our students. And I teach the Freshman Seminar on Life Skills so that I, personally, can mentor students on matters important to the marketplace.

Though they will be 20-something-years-old when they graduate, with the benefit of mentorship and directed experiences, HPU graduates will have amassed the wisdom usually acquired over many years.

Last fall, HPU welcomed approximately 6,040 students, once again its largest number of students in school history. The incoming freshman class represented many milestones. The class had the highest averages for unweighted GPA and SAT scores in school history, as well as the largest international student population. Twenty percent of the class represent first-generation students. The future remains bright at HPU as we celebrate our centennial anniversary in 2024, when we also plan to welcome inaugural cohorts of students in our schools of dental medicine and law.

Life is not about perfection. Life is about excellence. Our call here is to choose to be extraordinary. The circumstances in which you find yourself today do not determine where you end up. They only define where you start. We want students here who want to call this home. Parents give their children roots. At High Point University, we give them wings.

What do you feel are the keys to providing a quality education for the future?

When you read about college rankings and all the information thrown at students when it’s time for them to make a college decision, it’s easy to get lost. Let me tell you what I believe. It’s not about rankings, though I’m very proud of the top rankings that we have earned at High Point University. It’s not about where a school is located. It’s not even about the major that a student selects. It’s all about results. The thing that matters most is what students do with their lives and how they are prepared through college to succeed in life after college.

Our goal here is to plant seeds of greatness in the minds, hearts and souls of our students. For students, the goal isn’t to just thrive in class. It’s to maximize the experiential education experience only found at The Premier Life Skills University. It’s one thing to teach content. Students can learn about math and history at any university, but we want to teach context in addition to content. Our students learn through mentorship and by practicing skills they will need to succeed in their careers. Quality comes from a steady stream of little improvements. Over time, these have a major benefit for the future.

Every day, we ask ourselves this question: How can we provide an extraordinary education in an inspiring environment with caring people? And every day, we work tirelessly to make sure our educational model meets the demands of the marketplace and provides our students with transformational, invaluable opportunities. ●