

# The Art of the Possible

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 500 acres, and academic schools have grown from three to 10. 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 degree in business education 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

**You have served as HPU president for 17 years, much longer than the average tenure for university presidents. Why is mentoring college students so important to you?**

No one gets far without the help of others. I've been blessed, throughout my life, with meaningful mentors and others that have helped me along the way. I'm grateful for the extraordinary opportunity to mentor and help transform the lives of our HPU students who will go on to serve the world. High Point

University prepares graduates to live a life of both success and significance. There is nothing better than being able to help others achieve their dreams.

**Why is experiential learning woven so intricately throughout HPU's academic model?**

There's a Chinese proverb I share with students in my President's Seminar on Life Skills, a class I teach for all freshmen. It says: "What I hear, I forget. What I see, I may remember. But what I do, I understand." At

HPU, 25 percent of class time is devoted to hands-on learning, such as service work or in labs. It's one thing to take a political science class on local government. It's quite another thing to hand a hot meal and a patriotic T-shirt to a first responder as a way to thank them for their service during a global pandemic. It's one thing to learn about educational disparities among inner city youth in a social justice class. It's quite another thing to work one-on-one with children in the community on a regular, impactful basis. We prepare students for an ever-changing world with an innovative philosophy toward education that has drawn interest from college leaders, parents and students alike. Our approach to teaching and learning blends scientific strategy and creative artistry in a way that enables students to navigate the world as it is going to be, not merely the way it is today.

**You have surrounded your students with global leaders on a regular basis. Why is that important?**

We surround our students with dozens of accomplished individuals, in addition to our gifted faculty, because we want our students

**UNIVERSITY BRIEF** Founded in 1924, High Point University ([highpoint.edu](http://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" 2022 Edition, published by U.S. News & World Report, ranks HPU #1 among all regional colleges in the South (the tenth consecutive year at #1). It also ranked HPU for the seventh 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 eleventh 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 recognized HPU for Best College Dorms (#1), Most Beautiful Campus (#9), Best Career Services (#19) and Most Active Student Government Association (#19).



High Point University's campus is ranked among the Top 20 Most Beautiful in the Nation by The Princeton Review. HPU is also recognized as #1 Best Regional College in the South and #1 Most Innovative Regional College in the South by U.S. News & World Report



*Dr. Nido Qubein, High Point University's President, has led a total transformation of HPU since 2005 that includes quadrupling enrollment. Dr. Qubein is a regular presence on HPU's campus. He even teaches a class, titled *The President's Seminar on Life Skills*, for all freshmen.*

to believe that they too can accomplish their goals. Something amazing happens when students have continuous exposure to highly-successful executives and leaders – they learn that everyone has failures on their way to success. Our unique “In-Residence” program attracts extraordinary industry leaders who coach, mentor and work with our students

on campus. A few of these accomplished leaders include Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak, HPU’s Innovator in Residence; Netflix co-founder Marc Randolph, HPU’s Entrepreneur in Residence; Dallas Mavericks CEO Cynt Marshall, HPU’s Sports Executive in Residence, and many others. When students meet and connect with these industry titans,

they learn the most important lesson of all: the art of the possible. No longer is Mr. Wozniak the genius behind Apple Computer – he is a real person and a mentor to them. But beyond these accomplished leaders, I remind our faculty and staff that students see us as heroes, models and mentors. I remind our team of this important realization: We live, students watch and students learn. That’s why we must all contribute to the positive development of their mind, their heart and their soul. We provide impactful mentors to guide students not only in their four years on campus, but throughout their lives. Students do not merely enroll at HPU; they join our HPU family.

**How important is servant leadership to HPU’s culture?**

This world would be a better place if we all modeled the values of service, joy, generosity, gratitude and respect through everyday interactions, like holding a door, smiling at a stranger, waving to a friend and picking up trash. In my President’s Seminar on Life Skills that I teach for all freshmen, I encourage them to think of life as an act of stewardship with one-third earning, one-third learning and one-third serving. I’m very proud of our students, faculty and staff who contribute 110,000 volunteer hours each year. High Point University was recently recognized by United Way of Greater High Point for the second largest campaign in the city. The HPU family contributed \$260,000 this year to support the UWGHP and its 27 partnering agencies, an 829 percent increase since 2004.

**High Point University is recognized as one of the most beautiful campuses in America. Will you discuss the significance of its design?**

On our campus, we want students to not only be knowledgeable with content, we also want them to be confident with context. That is why, in addition to classrooms on campus, you’ll also find boardrooms, learning labs and collaborative spaces that reflect the style of global corporations. We want students prepared to navigate the real-world environment with knowledge, of course, but also with the confidence that comes from competence, and competence comes from experience. In a competitive marketplace, life skills, which are learned and earned through experience, are difference makers.

**High Point University is known to be continually transforming. What does its future hold?**

As HPU’s transformational growth plan continues, the university has continued to pursue additional healthcare programs. Establishing the state’s only private School of Dental Medicine and Oral Health reflects HPU’s commitment and innovative approach to healthcare education. Another part of this plan is an \$80 million library that will provide ample study space for students and house a new admissions center. It is expected to be completed by 2024, which is HPU’s 100th anniversary. Our future remains bright and we continue marching onward and upward with faithful courage. ●