



Chancellor's Message

One of the most exciting stories related to NationsUniversity is the work with students who are incarcerated. The response we have seen from over 1,500 students served by NU in recent years is gratifying and encouraging. This comes amidst a time when the prison population is growing and facilities are inadequate. In the face of this fact, one may ask, "What can we do?"



Shall we build more prisons?

Should we allocate more state and federal funds?

Do we need more counselors?

Will more alcohol and drug rehabilitation programs solve the problem?

Yes, perhaps we should build more prisons, allocate more funds, hire more counselors, and develop more rehabilitation programs. But these additions lie outside the reach of most individuals and churches. As needed and good as these may be, *spiritual* concerns lie beyond the responsibility of state and federal governments.

While opportunities for churches, ministries, and individuals are restricted, they are present. And Christians do respond in various ways to bring change in the lives of prisoners. In fact, thousands of prisoners are being reformed behind bars! These are the ones who have truly come to realize they need and want a new life. In addition to informal teaching, seminars, counseling programs, visitation, and religious services, formal educational efforts are also having a profound effect. But, frankly, formal educational opportunities are limited.

Some Christian schools are reaching out to the offenders. Many religious organizations are providing correspondence courses. But opportunity to achieve a full bachelor's or master's degree in spiritual formation is simply not available. **That is, until now.**

NationsUniversity has been able to go behind bars in perhaps 100 prisons in the U.S. and overseas. The students generally attracted are those who have decided to change direction and make a contribution to society rather than be a drain on it. In this edition of the *NU Partners*, we are focusing on this important aspect of service. We hope you will read it thoroughly and help us underwrite the student scholarship program for the balance of 2009.

Mac Lynn, Chancellor

Focus on Prisons

Student Letter

Dear Friends,

I would like to thank everyone at NationsUniversity for making it possible for me to earn my master's degree. I am an inmate in the Florida prison system, and I work full-time in the Chapel department as a chaplain's clerk for the prison ministry. The college education that you have provided has helped me be the man God has called me to be.

NationsUniversity has really helped strengthen my knowledge of the Bible and the ministry which is much needed for my prison ministry. This is my mission field. I have spent half my life trying to get out of the place and the other half trying to get back in the legal way as a minister to help the incarcerated men change their lives.

In His Service,
Robert Clark



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Serving the Prison Student

Servicing students within prison walls must of necessity be done in a unique way. These students do not have access to the Internet or e-mail. Contact has to be made directly via post and augmented by nearby persons who assist the students within the prison itself. Those who assist with this part of the program must not only be willing to minister to prisoners; they must be authorized by prison officials. Permission to send materials to students is often required. Students themselves are also limited in the types of courses they are allowed to take. Rarely can they conduct interviews with other students. Usually, they cannot proctor exams for each other. They are limited in funds and textbooks. Consequently, the structure for supporting the service to the incarcerated is different from the norm. It is more expensive to service a student in prison than to service a student via the Internet.

Students most likely to continue their studies are those who are serving sentences of several years duration. County jails and short-term facilities are not likely to yield the results found among students in state prisons and federal penitentiaries. The most promising are those who have already decided they want a different life—both while they are within prison and when they are released.

Current student enrollment: 453 (422 male; 31 female)

Awards & Degrees conferred: 133

Student Letter

To David Vester and the Staff of NationsUniversity,

Recently, I received *The Student Newsletter* #59, and was reading the “Provost’s Ponderings” by David Vester and could not help but respond based on the conviction of my conscience to share a brief testimony, or rather, the path in which God has brought me through.

To be honest, it is still extremely hard for me to speak about this for it is still tender to my heart. On February 2, 2009, the day started as usual—wake up, call for PRIDE employees, and being escorted to breakfast then to work. About 8:30 A.M. the phone rang in the office at PRIDE. It was the prison facility senior chaplain. He was calling for me to visit him in his office immediately. I was informed by the senior chaplain that my mother had died. I didn’t know what to do as the reality of the situation began to pierce my heart. I mean, I had prayed for God to allow her to live through her lung and colon cancer for six more years so that she could see me released and do something positive with my life. Unfortunately, to my rational mind this wasn’t fair, but ultimately, I knew God had everything under control. With that understanding, I found much comfort.

I had told my mom and dad of my great desire to serve the Lord in full-time ministry. She was ecstatic about my future in the arms of the Father. I knew at the moment I told her I was taking courses from NationsUniversity and that God’s calling upon my life was serious that for the first time I had made her proud. So many times have I proven a failure in my life because of my ignorance, and that’s why I’m in prison. I continue to pray that by the grace of God I will be granted the wisdom, knowledge, and understanding to continue in the courses given by NU and that one day I will earn my degree and make my mom (as I know she is now in the kingdom) and the God I serve and desire to know deeper proud of me.

I would like to say thank you so much NationsUniversity as a whole for the opportunity you have provided me to grant me the knowledge and gift that God has called me to. Please forgive me because, due to my financial state from being in prison, I am unable to donate. Prayerfully, I will one day be able to return the gift which NU has enriched upon my life.

Thank you for your time and prayers. God bless you in the love of Christ.

Marcus McKinney

An Appeal to our Partners

There appears to be no limit to the number of offenders whose lives can be enriched by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Without formal recruitment on the part of NU, the number of students being attracted to its offerings is steadily growing. This testifies to the depth of yearning which the prisoners have within themselves for spiritual nourishment. It also testifies to the credibility which others feel for the quality of education that NU offers, and so they recommend the institution. There is no doubt that by making known the availability of the school's offerings to a wider prison audience, the current numbers would double.

The major hindrance to expansion is funding. The students are unable to pay the \$100 it costs NU to service them for a year's study. The costs include the publication of materials, postage, and administration. That seems a small amount to pay for higher education, but because of NUs structure, partnerships, and volunteers, that is what it costs.

With the projected growth through 2009, we should be serving 500 inmates by the end of the year. That brings the expense to \$50,000. With that amount, NU can bear the cost of administration, materials, postage, and maintenance. The Harpeth Hills Church of Christ has kicked off the campaign with a contribution of \$2,500. During the remainder of April, we are endeavoring to raise \$47,250 that can cover the year's expense for this part of NU's operations.

We invite you to underwrite one or more of these student sponsorships and become personally involved in a significant "prison ministry."

NU is seeking a local church (or several local churches) or individuals who are willing to underwrite the prison program (or part of it) on a sustaining basis and become intimately involved in its operation. This would be an excellent opportunity for a congregation seeking more involvement in prison ministry. We invite contacts so more information can be provided.

Here are three options for a local person/church to consider.

- Assume full responsibility for a given number of students.
- Assume medium level service responsibility for a given number of students.
- Assume limited responsibility for a given number of students.

My Journey with NationsUniversity

John A. Casteel

In late 1998 I was sitting in a county jail in Kingfisher, Oklahoma facing multiple charges of Forgery and Theft. This was not my first time down this path, but I was determined it would be my last. I had been studying with Brother Ken Richter from the Kingfisher Church of Christ. He told me about this new school where I could earn a degree and he thought I would be a perfect candidate. So I sent in the application form he had given me. Thus began what has now been a ten year journey with NationsUniversity.

I didn't want to get "Jailhouse Religion" because that is nothing more than a coping mechanism with no real conversion. However, what I found was that I had returned to the faith of my youth. As I moved through the system I continued to study with Nations earning three degrees along the way: an Associate of Religious Studies in 2001, a Bachelor of Christian Development in 2002, and a Master of Religious Studies in late 2003.

After I was transferred to the State Minimum Security Prison at Atoka, Oklahoma I was assigned a job in the Education Department where I helped to sign up a number of others for the degree program at Nations. I am happy to say that I know of at least four of the men I worked with there earned at least one degree with NU. I am now a free man and have been for a number of years. I am still taking classes with NationsUniversity, currently working on my Master of Ministry which I hope to finish this year. I am also now a volunteer with Nations working as the Director of Prison Enrollment.

When John was released from prison a couple years ago, he resisted having anything to do with prisons. But now, he has come to realize that this is where his passion is. John is assuming the role with NationsUniversity as Director of Prison Enrollment. We are able to provide some financial assistance, but not a decent salary for the work he is doing. With the success of this campaign, we can expand our services to those who are seeking a walk with God.

Accreditation Procedures

As many of you already know, NationsUniversity is applying for accreditation with a national body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. The process is a lengthy one and requires several steps. To date, the steps completed include a required orientation, a formal application, and a Self-Evaluation Report. We are now into our second year of the process and hope to complete it by January 2010. The advantages of accreditation are many. It heightens accountability, elevates standards, and makes degrees more widely recognized.

Named Colleges

NU currently has students in 133 countries, with a goal of having at least one student in every nation of the world. In view of that goal, NU has set up a "college" to represent the 192 independent nations recognized by the United Nations. Each of these colleges is assigned a name in recognition of a significant donor of time or money. The name is retained for one year and may be renewed by additional service or money.

Following are ten colleges that are open for renaming. New donors may secure one of the colleges for the amount indicated.

The College of Tajikistan	\$756
The College of the Philippines	\$1,001
The College of Suriname	\$1,001
The College of Serbia	\$1,001
The College of Greece	\$1,001
The College of Canada	\$1,001
The College of Kiribati	\$1,001
The College of Burundi	\$1,001
The College of South Korea	\$1,101
The College of Dominica	\$1,501

Current Enrollment

Total Students: 3,760

Male - 2,970

Female - 790

Total Countries: 133

Student Letter

Dear NationsUniversity,

What a wonderful day in the Lord! I am a Texas inmate incarcerated in the TDC system. I am indigent--alone in this world besides Jesus and my spiritual family, the body of Christ. I depend on Christ for basically everything. The state furnishes the basic necessities, but Jesus is in control of that also. I was saved in the county jail while awaiting trial. I was facing capital punishment. I knew I wasn't guilty of this charge, but still the sin/crime I committed demanded judgment and payment! Most of my family weren't talking to me, and the ones who were had the look of doom, desperation, and fear. I didn't see it then, but it was Satan tormenting them.

In May, 2003, I took a life, one that was very close and dear to me. I took the life of my wife in a violent rage. It started as a discussion because of an affair she was involved in. I had recently been placed on antidepressants because of depression and extreme anxiety, required sleeping pills, and was seeing a Christian counselor who, after six visits, had never referred to a single scripture! When my wife, Ethel, lashed out in anger and slapped me, I lost control. I don't remember much until I stopped hitting her and the room came back into focus. My wife was sitting on the floor looking into my eyes, the damage done. My mind turned into a slot machine, and I could not rationally think. Ethel bled to death in my arms.

I confessed to a Texas Ranger. He asked questions that made me relive the thing whole thing. I was sent to a secure cell alone and placed on 24-hour suicide watch. They had no idea that I had taken sleeping pills with beer before they arrested me. I was hoping to go to sleep and never wake up!

When I woke up, they moved me to a dorm. A Church of Christ friend and preacher came to see me and brought me a new NIV Bible. He talked with me for a short while.

I was still secretly planning to kill myself. I planned it for about a week. I had a thirty-minute period of time to do it. No pain--just hang, pass out, and die. I started going through motions in my head of saying good-bye to my kids, my brother and sister, and other family members. Before I could go through with my plan, images of my children asking me not to go through with it began appearing in my head and I couldn't shake them. Then, a sharp pain entered my head at the top of my skull--a throbbing pain like I'd never felt before. I cried out to Jesus to please stop the pain. Instantly, it stopped and peace came over me. My clouded mind cleared, and I began to see and feel differently. I wasn't saved by any means, but Jesus was there and in control. I went to my Bible and began to read. I saw my sin and my selfishness. I cried as Jesus emptied me of self pity, anger, worry . . . everything.

After I chose to follow Him, He gave me a hunger for His word that is still alive today. I took in the word like a starved mongrel dog and shared it with all who would listen and still do. This is not the jail house religion that is so prevalent here. It is the true presence of God working!

On July 1, 2003, I was baptized at Mary Ellen Harvester Church of Christ in Pampa, TX. Shortly after, I signed a plea agreement of life in prison and avoided a capital sentence.

Now, more than five years later, I have taken hundreds of Bible correspondence courses and remain hungry for more. A man at church saw my hunger and gave me the address for NationsUniversity. I am interested in an education and desire to be a minister. God has chosen me to be an evangelist and the prison is my ministry! I am interested in what you have to offer a Christian inmate.

I pray for your school and ministry! May God send you appropriate funds to keep feeding the nations!

Jeffrey Goldsmith
(1 Tim. 1:12)