

and make them feel good about their contribution to the institution. You are blessed to have him at Walla Walla College.”

Although he’s lauded for his ability to relate to others, McVay says his biggest adjustment here has been entering the world of undergraduate students. “They’re a tremendously wonderful group. But my challenge is that for the last eight years I’ve been hanging around graduate students, who are at a different stage of life,” McVay says.

“If there is a learning curve, it’s entering into that otherness of the undergraduate student population and learning their world afresh. I’m learning their concerns, their interests, their lifestyle, and how they live out their Christian discipleship. It’s not that I’m finding it difficult or unpleasant. It’s really quite a joy,” he adds. “I’m just having to acquire a new vocabulary. But I needed an update, so now I’m re-engaging a new culture and that is being quite an invigorating process.”

That learning curve has not halted his big plans for the student body at WWC.

“Second-rate academics will offer no note of praise to our Creator. The fact that our education is grounded in commitment to Christ and to Scripture doesn’t let us off the hook in terms of academic excellence. If anything, it should lead to broad-based excellence in thought and learning,” he says.

One future goal has the new president on the edge of his seat with excitement. “In Christian education as a whole, we have done an excellent job of providing service and outreach opportunities for our young people, and a variety of worship and witnessing opportunities on our campuses,” he says. “But I think we haven’t done such a good job in ensuring that when our students walk on our campus, they are accompanied in an intentional journey of spiritual formation, Christian discipleship and faith nurture.”

“I think some Adventist institution ought to wake up and craft a more intentional model, then put it into place and watch it work. We have work to do in that area, and I look forward to participating in developing a vigorous model on this campus. It’s a dream that has been growing in my heart for a long time.”

During his inaugural address McVay laid out “four rather daring prophecies” about WWC, which he called “elements of the bold vision for its future.” Noting the change in reference to WWC’s new name, Walla Walla University, those elements can be summed up as:

- WWU will continue to treasure and explore its past, the values on which the institution was founded, seeking and finding guiding principles and ideas there that remain insightful and formative as we confront the changing landscape of a very different era.

- WWU will practice careful stewardship, tending with care the resources offered to its keeping, in service of its God-ordained mission to offer excellent education.

- WWU will take seriously the central issue of the character, integrity and faith of its students. We will hone our skills in faith nurture, spiritual formation and Christian discipleship.

- WWU will steadfastly resist becoming an end in itself. It will seek to give itself in ministry to its students and to this world of ours.

## Continuing the Story

It’s a story come full circle, but in no way close to its end. “My father had an endless mental file of stories from his years here, ones that he would trot out with some regularity...as you listened to the stories, you could tell that he loved this place.”

“We each have such stories. Our history is full of them. In each such story echoes that grace-filled message: The presence of the Lord is in this place. I am honored to serve my father’s school as we enter into the bold vision God has laid before us.” •

*Kristi Spurgeon, Walla Walla College public information officer, writes from College Place, Washington.*



Aaron Troia



Aaron Troia



Aaron Troia