

Former Nazareth president joins law firm to guide higher ed institutions through pandemic, recession



Daan Braveman

Former Nazareth President Daan Braveman has joined Harter Secrest & Emery LLP as a higher education consultant to help schools face coronavirus- and recession-related challenges, as well as plan for long-term success.

"I'm very passionate about the role of higher education and its impact," he said.

Braveman said his affiliation with Harter Secrest & Emery was born out of years of working together during his tenure at Nazareth.

"I'm excited about this," he said. "On every level, this firm resonates with my vision and goals."

Braveman spent 43 years in higher education as a professor and administrator, including the last 15 years as president of Nazareth. Braveman, who was the college's longest serving president, retired in June.

In his new role, Braveman will consult with college and university administrators, directors and trustees to help them address and plan for the wave of issues facing campuses in both the near-and-long-term.

Those issues include strategic alliance, including potential mergers and acquisitions; crisis management; human resources issues; diversity and inclusion; risk assessment; Title IX; and other matters.

Braveman said higher education institutions of all sizes are facing numerous challenges, many of which existed before the coronavirus pandemic and most of which have been exacerbated by it.

"It's a good time to step back, think creatively and turn these challenges into opportunities, he said.

Higher education can have tangible and long-term impacts, he added.

Not only has it been shown that a college degree can have a ripple effect in families – meaning a family member who receives a diploma makes it more likely other family members will follow – but it is also an economic driver in the community.

"Higher education and healthcare are the two major economic drivers in our region, and in many others," Braveman said. "That not only impact students, but also the entire community."

Braveman noted higher education may need to rethink itself moving forward and he has the first-hand experience to help schools navigate any potential changes.

"I've lived the experience," he said.

Under Braveman's leadership, Nazareth experienced increased retention, academic reputation and a growth in endowment and enrollment.

He also developed and implemented operational and academic strategic plans, facilitated collaboration among local institutions to improve the quality of math and science education, developed a strategic plan for crisis management and communication and conducted a complete review of all academic and administrative programs.

Prior to joining Nazareth, Braveman spent 28 years at Syracuse University College of Law, including eight years as dean. At Syracuse, he also served as an associate professor, professor and associate dean. He is a graduate of the University of Rochester and earned a law degree from the University of Pennsylvania. Braveman's breadth of knowledge means clients will be able to receive practical advice in dealing with immediate challenges and also learn ways on how to be more proactive in preparing for challenges to



Terri Conroy

come, said Theresa Conroy, partner and head of Harter Secrest & Emery's higher education practice.

"Daan has incredible professional experience, a passion for higher education and a proven track record of leadership," Conroy said. "We are thrilled, grateful and honored to have him on board."

Braveman and Conroy agree that collaboration will be a key component in how colleges and universities prepare for an uncertain future.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected higher education in many ways, from refunding room and board for the spring semester when colleges shut down to facing decreasing enrollment this fall amid pandemic concerns and the possibility for more campus shut-downs if the virus accelerates.

"Some schools were already on the edge (financially), and COVID-19 could push them over it," Braveman said. "There could be a real major economic impact."

He stresses the idea of alliances and shared services among schools, from administrative services to programming.

"Shared services present an opportunity for schools to align and still provide high quality services to students, which is their ultimate mission," Braveman said.

Communication is also key, he said, noting schools have been working together as they were making reopening plans for their campuses for the fall and that communication should continue.

Communication and collaboration are areas Braveman has focused on during his career and they continue to be priorities.

He participates in several local and industry organizations, including as a board member and former president of the National New American College and University, a national consortium of colleges and universities; a board member for Campus Compact of New York and Pennsylvania, an organization of over 100 colleges and universities in New York and Pennsylvania, and on the Board of Trustees for Nazareth College.

Another major challenge colleges and universities face relates to racial diversity and inclusion — topics that have gained national attention recently through the Black Lives Matter movement.

Braveman was focused on inclusion issues at Nazareth and believes it is one of the most important issues for schools to address. He adds college is often one of the first times students actively engage with others who may come from different racial, economic or social backgrounds.

Under Braveman's leadership, Nazareth created the position of vice president for diversity and inclusion to address these issues.

"Too often differences divide us," Braveman said. "In my opinion, differences are a source of strength."

While he is ready to share his experience and insights to help colleges and universities in his new role, Braveman said it will be an adjustment not being on campus this fall.

"I'll miss it tremendously," he said, but notes he will still be focused on higher education. "I couldn't ask for a better change by this opportunity."

Andrea Deckert is a Rochester-area freelance writer.