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# A True Underdog: The Contributions of Professor D. Barry Lumsden to Teacher Development in Higher Education

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## Academic Leadership Journal

People love stories about real-life underdogs who overcome insurmountable odds to achieve success. This article chronicles one such underdog in the truest sense of the word. As one of the privileged students to have had the opportunity to study under Dr. Lumsden, this paper is written as a tribute to the contributions of D. Barry Lumsden to the contemporary practice of Higher Education. Lumsden has developed numerous teachers in the field of higher education. The information for this paper was obtained through personal interviews with Lumsden, correspondence with his former students and firsthand experiences as his student. Lumsden and I maintain a great friendship and I continue to be mentored by him both professionally and personally.

The second of three sons born to George and Helen Lumsden, Dr. Dan Barry (“Buck”) Lumsden was early on in his life an underdog. Few, if any would have predicted the contributions he has made to the field of higher education and to the lives of his students throughout his impressive 36-year teaching career.

The educational research literature would have a huge void had it not been for his tireless work and contributions. Dr. Lumsden has modeled the way for encouraging practitioners and researchers alike to publish research and scholarly articles. Reflecting on educational research and practice, one must give credit to Dr. Lumsden for his work as leader, professor, author and editor and for his driven persistence to ensure that his education research is documented in the literature over a span of 36 years.

Dr. Lumsden began his decades-long career in higher education after receiving his doctorate in Education from North Carolina State University, not Harvard, Stanford, Yale, or the like.. Since then he has taught at Lenoir Community College, N.C. State University, the University of Florida, Virginia Commonwealth University, and the University of North Texas. He has been a visiting professor at Baylor University in Texas, Harding University in Arkansas, and the University of Arkansas in Little Rock. Most recently he has been a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Alabama. Today he holds an appointment as a Senior Research Fellow at Texas A&M University. Professor Lumsden is Editor-in- Chief of the peer reviewed Community College Journal of Research and Practice which he founded 35 years ago. He is also Editor-in-Chief of the international peer reviewed journal Educational Gerontology which he founded 31 years ago. In 2000, he founded Christian Higher Education for which he currently serves as Editor-in- Chief.

The Student Association at the University of North Texas has awarded Dr. Lumsden its Honor Professor Certificate of Recognition. Phi Delta Kappa has presented him its Educator of the Year award, and Dr. Lumsden recently received from the Council for the Study of Community Colleges its Distinguished Service Award.

Lumsden has always been an excellent mentor to his students. He enthusiastically assisted teachable students who sought his guidance in the area of writing publishable articles. One of Dr. Lumsden’s

former students now on the faculty of Texas A&M University wrote the following:

“Dr. Barry has always evidenced a knack for encouraging scholarship among his students. During one class, he spent a great deal of time talking about the importance of publishing to increase learning. His words struck home. Two articles were immediately under development. When my efforts were completed, they were submitted to him for review. The idea was to find out the expectations for scholarly work so that those benchmarks could be met. Dr. Barry took the two articles from me and told me to meet him at his office the next week. The week passed slowly with visions of articles that were being ripped apart by such a great scholar. Upon returning to meet Dr. Barry in his office, he bade me sit down. Dr. Barry then told me that the works would be published. He gave me some gentle insight into methodologies for improving my work. Every word of guidance was intended to make my work better. His gentle hand and humble manner greatly enriched my desire to publish. Whenever one of my articles is accepted for publication, his guidance and insight are remembered and celebrated. No teacher could ever seek a more noble path than to follow in his footsteps” (L. Rusty Waller, personal correspondence, 2009).

Another student recalled the unique ability Professor Lumsden had to draw the best out of his students through his selfless example:

“When I think of Dr. Lumsden’s contributions I think of his desire to see us succeed. He took a personal interest in each of his students. Many doctoral students enter their programs with desires and hopes of graduating. But because they must juggle a full time job and a family, the attrition rate is high as the rigors of the highest degree takes its toll. Many get to the point of the dissertation and never complete it because they don’t have a clue of how to proceed. Dr. Lumsden sat me down and basically charted a course for my success. He said, “Terry, you need to start thinking about your dissertation topic right away.” My very first course was an elective, “The Dissertation in Higher Ed”. This was recommended and taught by Dr. Lumsden. The mystery and fear of the dreaded dissertation was diffused early in the process of my doctoral studies. My confidence was high as was the confidence of most, if not all, of his students. My writing developed under Dr. Lumsden. I remember the moment it went from one level to another. I was working on one of my assignments for another class. I kept hearing Dr. Lumsden in my head say, “writing takes time, it takes years to develop into a good writer. Don’t take short cuts. You have to start behaving like a PhD now. When you get your PhD and you write like the average guy, people will see your work and think, ‘this guy has his doctorate and I can write better than him.’” From that moment I decided to write better. Those were the kinds of tit-bits we got on a regular basis.” (Winston Sutherland, personal correspondence, 2009).

Professor Lumsden’s career contributions have truly made a difference in the study of education through his editorships and publications, mentoring and encouraging others, and studies of Education and instruction that are now documented for present and future reflections.

Born November 24, 1939, Lumsden was raised in a low-income family. His father never finished high school and worked at a drug wholesale firm. His mother was a cafeteria manager for the Durham City public schools. The family residence was a one-bedroom duplex at 1302 Liberty Street in east Durham, North Carolina. In this tiny, coupé up duplex for more than twenty years lived Mr. and Mrs. Lumsden, Barry, and his two brothers, George, Jr., and Ricky. Along with his older brother George (now deceased) and younger brother Rick, Lumsden enjoyed a reasonably normal childhood. He was an

unusually playful young boy and was occasionally expelled from high school for truancy or delinquency of one sort or another. During his high school years he worked a morning paper route. Assured of his mother's love, Lumsden never felt really accepted by his father. Lumsden was a mediocre student throughout elementary, junior high and high school up until his sophomore year. A low point in Barry's life was when he failed the tenth grade. Frightened about the direction his life was taking, he ran away from home in North Carolina to Alberta, Virginia. Expulsion from high school was taboo in American culture in the 1950's. The case can be made that the deck was stacked against Lumsden early in his life. However, the year 1956 was a turning point in his life. After meeting C. Stacy Woods, a visiting preacher at his church, and Executive Director of InterVarsity Fellowship, Barry, in his own words, "invited God" into his young life. He committed himself to his studies at Durham High School and from that point on made all A's.

After graduating from high school in 1958, Lumsden left home and went to Emmaus Bible School in Oak Park, Illinois. He graduated with a diploma in Bible in 1961. He later moved to Roanoke, Virginia to "pastor" a small Plymouth Brethren Church. Suffering from extreme loneliness, Lumsden married his girlfriend from Durham, North Carolina. The two had met years before at a Plymouth Brethren Church in Durham. Judy Sloan and Barry Lumsden were married on June 6, 1963. Lumsden and his new bride remained in Roanoke for a few months before returning to North Carolina to finish his dream of furthering his education.

Lumsden entered Louisburg College in the fall of 1963, graduating with an Associate of Arts degree in Liberal Arts in May of 1964. He began attending North Carolina State University in pursuit of a Bachelor's degree in Psychology in the fall of 1964. To supplement his income and help pay his way through school, from 1964 – 1967 he was director of Adult Literacy Programs at W.W. Holding Technical Institute in Raleigh, North Carolina.

In the fall of 1966, Lumsden sought to further his education by enrolling in graduate school at N.C. State. The Graduate School at the University required a bachelor's degree or its equivalent for admission to post-baccalaureate degree work. Lumsden was one course short of meeting the requirements for a bachelor's degree. The Dean of the graduate school at the time refused to accept Lumsden into the Master's program. Classes had begun and Lumsden was already three days behind. Feeling desperate and with limited options before him, Lumsden appealed to the Chancellor of N.C. State University, a wonderful man named John Tyler Caldwell, and explained his conundrum and his deep desire to enter the graduate school. The response from Dr. Caldwell was another turning point in Lumsden's life. Caldwell picked up the telephone and called the Dean of the Graduate School and instructed him to admit Lumsden into the the Graduate School and to waive all late penalties. Caldwell clearly and intently communicated that he wanted Lumsden in class the next day. Lumsden remarked to Chancellor Caldwell, "You will never regret this decision. I will not let you down." Caldwell's actions inspired Lumsden, the underdog, and he has never forgotten the act of mercy and kindness shown to him that day by the understanding and great Chancellor. Lumsden was in class the next day. He graduated with a Master of Science degree in Adult and Community College Education/Sociology in 1968. Two years later he completed the requirements for a doctoral degree in Adult and Community College Education/Sociology. He was awarded the Doctor of Education degree in 1970 by N.C. State. Lumsden taught courses on sociology at Lenoir Community College in Kinston, North Carolina after completing his doctoral program.

Upon graduation, Lumsden joined the faculty of his alma mater and taught courses in Adult and Community College Education. He taught at N.C. State from 1970 – 1974 where he also served as director of the Adult Learning Research Center. Lumsden's two children were born during this period of his life. Gina was born in 1968; Danny was born in 1972.

In 1974, Lumsden encountered another turning point in his life when he accepted a position as Associate Professor of Postsecondary Education at the University of Florida in Gainesville. He remained at the University of Florida for two years but left in 1976 when he learned that the soft money funding his position would no longer be available. Another turning point in Lumsden's life occurred when he accepted a position as Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at Virginia Commonwealth University. In Richmond, Virginia. He left Virginia Commonwealth University after only one year, because his marriage was ending after thirteen years. His wife and two children moved back to Raleigh, North Carolina. Lumsden wanted to be close to his children so he resigned his position and moved back to North Carolina where he taught at the Utah-based Webber State University's extension campus at Pope Air Force Base next to Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, NC. In February, 1978 Lumsden interviewed for a position at what was known at the time as North Texas State University in Denton, TX. He accepted an invitation to join the faculty and moved to Denton on August 17, 1978 to become an associate professor of Higher Education. He was so broke financially that he had to borrow \$1,500 from his mother to make the near cross country trek from Durham, North Carolina to Denton, Texas. Behind his 1963 woefully run down Buick Skylark he excitedly and cheerfully towed a 5 x 8 U-Haul trailer containing literally all his earthly possessions. This was another turning point in Lumsden's life and career. He would remain at what became the University of North Texas until his retirement in 2006. Lumsden suffered his first heart attack in 1983 and had his first round of quadruple by-pass surgery. He has had two more heart attacks since and a second round of by-pass surgery in 1991.. A recovering alcoholic, today he suffers from adult onset diabetes and a mild case of emphysema as a result of smoking cigarettes for nearly 30 years. Since 1983 Lumsden has not puffed a cigarette and since 1994 has imbibed no alcohol.

Although Lumsden's personal life has been marred by disappointment and difficulty, his professional career has been successful in whatever he has set out to accomplish. Throughout his career Lumsden started or helped to start six peer reviewed academic journals. Publisher William Begell, president of Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, in New York City, has been instrumental in this process. In 1977, Lumsden founded Educational Gerontology, a premier, highly visible international journal and remains its Editor-in-Chief. He was the co-founder (1977) of Death Education with Dr. Hannelore Wass at the University of Florida and consulting editor of the journal from 1977 – 1990. With his professorial colleague and personal buddy, Dr. Lance Gentile, in 1979 he co-founded the journal Reading Psychology. He has been a consulting editor for the British Journal of Educational Gerontology since 1985 and co-founded with Dr. Randy Schumacher at the University of North Texas the journal Structural Equation Modeling in 1994. Lumsden has been a consulting editor for the Journal of Texas Studies since 1994. In 1977, he founded the Community College Journal of Research and Practice and for the past 34 years has been its Editor-in-Chief. In 1999, he founded Christian Higher Education: A Journal of Applied Research and Practice and continues to serve as its Editor-in-Chief.

Lumsden's first of six books was with F.J. McGuigan, Psychology professor at Hollins College in Virginia, titled Contemporary Approaches to Conditioning and Learning published by V.H. Winston & Sons, Inc in 1973. His second and third books, with Professor Ronald H. Sherron, at Virginia

Commonwealth University in Richmond, included *Educational Gerontology: The State of the Art and Experimental Studies in Adult Learning and Memory*. The latter book cited and discussed experimental and quasi-experimental studies on adult learning and memory and demonstrated the interrelatedness of theory and research. While it accepted the results of research on primates, pigeons, and rats, the basis for this volume was the notion that homo sapiens is the proper subject of the study of homo sapiens. That is, to understand how adult humans learn, more emphasis needs to be put upon learning among adult humans.

Lumsden's fourth book, with R. K. Bass, was *Instructional Development: The State of the Art*. This text was based upon instructional design and evaluation processes. In-depth discussions of organizational and faculty development were included. Topics included the curriculum development process, theories of learning and teaching applied to the design of instruction for adults, the role of technology in teaching and learning, and the importance of pre-assessment, formative and summative evaluation.

Professor Lumsden's next book was *The Older Adult Learner* in 1988. This book brought together knowledge in both the fields of higher education and gerontology. Some of the topics treated were a history of education for older learners, a philosophy of education for older adults, cognitive and non-cognitive factors affecting learning among older adults, and career education for older adults. Lumsden's sixth book was with L.A. Alexander and bore the title *Understanding Eating Disorders*.

Lumsden has authored or co-authored countless articles and presented papers at professional meetings throughout the United States and around the world. He has been known to take his students to conferences where they have made presentations together as part of the mentoring process.

Lumsden became a tenured, full professor of higher education at the University

of North Texas in 1986. His areas of teaching experience have included undergraduate and graduate courses about Writing and Completing the Doctoral Dissertation, sociology, higher education, learning theory, academic administration, instructional development and evaluation, and writing for scholarly publication. He has directed numerous professional studies, in addition to chairing over 119 doctoral dissertations during the past 36 years. Since joining the graduate faculty at the University of North Texas, Lumsden has served as committee member on more than 100 dissertation research committees.

One of Professor Lumsden's areas of expertise is writing for publication. Along with his own impressive list of publications has been his encouragement to his students to write papers in their courses worthy of publication. Lumsden has also encouraged his students to publish articles based on their completed dissertations. As a result of Lumsden's mentoring in this area many of his students have published articles during their doctoral programs. However, one of Lumsden's biggest disappointments over the years has been the poor quality of student writing and the lack of interest in scholarly research and publication by most doctoral students in Higher Education. Lumsden believes this is a great injustice by those who hold doctoral degrees. He feels that it is a responsibility of those who hold terminal degrees in Higher Education to contribute to the field of scholarship in higher education. According to Lumsden (2008), "those who hold doctoral degrees need to cease being only consumers of knowledge, and should become producers of knowledge." [1] Those who produce research and contribute to the field of scholarship take themselves to the next level.

Lumsden almost always thinks outside the box and challenges the status quo. He believes that people take precedence over policy. Professor Lumsden challenges authority by “coloring outside the lines” feeling strongly that people come before policy. This holds especially true in his advisement of his students through helping them to find the most efficient way through their doctoral programs. However, he has never advocated or endorsed that students short-circuit the educational process by not completing all the requirements of their programs. Lumsden’s students appreciate his sincere interest in them and his apparent concern for their future success. Perhaps this is why the Student Association at the University of North Texas recognized him as Honor Professor. He looked at his doctoral students and enthusiastically sought to invest in their lives. For example one of Lumsden’s former students who now teaches at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary recalled,

“To be successful in your doctoral program, you only need two things: possess medium intelligence and perseverance.” Dr. Barry Lumsden pronounced these words during my first class as a doctoral student at UNT. He wanted to encourage his new students who were hesitant of their abilities to complete a doctoral program. He also reinforced several times that the main purpose of a doctorate was learning and not just earning a credential, “make sure you don’t have the experience and miss the meaning.” He did not say, however, that he will walk alongside us to help us in the process because he invested his life in the life of his students with only two conditions from us, hard work and dedication. Dr. Lumsden wrote many articles, edited academic journals and directed more dissertations than many departments combined. He became a major figure in Higher Education and Christian Higher Education. However, his greatest legacy is his students. I am grateful for his influence and consider a privilege to have learned under him. I am sure my students are grateful too” (Octavio Esqueda, personal correspondence 2009 ).

Dr. Barbara Guthrie, one of Dr. Lumsden’s former doctoral advisees, wrote an article titled “Memorable Teacher” that was published in 1987 in the journal, *College Teaching*. This article discussed how Lumsden made it his mission to pastor his students.

His students say he was never boring when teaching in class. Lumsden never used notes when teaching. He has a brilliant mind. His students appreciated the opportunity to study under him. He had a Socratic style of teaching. However, his intelligence was never displayed in an arrogant manner. According to one of Lumsden’s students now working in Beijing, China,

“I always looked forward to any course Dr. Barry taught, and took it if at all possible. In the classroom, he was always well-prepared, knew his content thoroughly, and had an exceptional ability to engage each student with the content, with the other students, and with himself personally. His thorough knowledge of the subject, his humor, and his communication gifts made him an exceptional university professor for anyone remotely associated with him.

In addition, he was always available when any student, certainly including myself, wanted to interact personally. His ever-present warmth, wisdom and direction was an absolutely crucial part of my doctoral studies experience – his gifts in these areas influenced me for life” (Tom Lowder, personal correspondence, 2009).

Lumsden has a great sense of humor and frequently guffaws at himself. One minute in class he may be telling a hilariously dumb joke and the next minute he can be as serious as a heart attack as he explicates and nuances some theory of adult learning. He is the quintessential storyteller. One of

Lumsden's students, an assistant professor in the Psychology department at the University of Windsor, Canada, recounted,

"I took several courses from Dr. Lumsden and he always brought his unique sense of humor to the classroom. He loved his t-shirts with witty sayings – he had them made at a t-shirt shop in Dallas. Whenever he would run across a particularly clever saying off he would go to have it imprinted on a shirt, usually black, that he could delight in wearing to class. One of his favorites was a shirt that proudly proclaimed that he was a "voice in the wilderness," of course it was written in Latin! Dr. Lumsden is a person who likes to have fun. And his lectures were not lectures at all but intellectual journeys filled with humor, challenges, anecdotes, probing questions, and wisdom that came from his years of experience and his willingness to tell it like it is. He would lounge in his chair and force us to stop taking ourselves so seriously and instead look outside of that limited scope and think about higher education as a part of the larger picture of society. And no matter the message on his t-shirt that day or the sheer silliness of whatever his favorite joke of the week was, he was always, at the heart of his teaching, intensely interested in us learning from him and from each other" (Jill Jackson, personal correspondence, 2009).

Lumsden was always approachable and kind both in the classroom and outside of the classroom. He would often meet students for breakfast, lunch or dinner, since most of them had full-time jobs while taking classes. Lumsden would insist on paying for the meal most of the time. He understood that many of his students were struggling financially with the burden of tuition on top of their living expenses. Lumsden always made efforts to get to know his students and their families. He knew the names of his students' wives and their children. He was genuinely interested in his students. For instance one of his students had this to say,

"He built relationships with us. We would meet at a restaurant to discuss how things were developing. It wasn't uncommon to have him over for dinner or attend a function together, all in an attempt to forge relationships. The mentor in him was ubiquitous. As good mentors do, he gave of himself tirelessly. This wasn't limited to his time, he often picked up the tab at restaurants for the entire 10-15 in the group. I also don't think I know of another who work harder. He didn't like excuses as he taught us to find a way. His penchant for excellence rubbed off on me. It is one of the benefits of working with him" (Winston Sutherland, personal correspondence, 2009).

Lumsden was incorrigibly suspicious of administrators in higher education. To him administrators were the petty bourgeoisie; the faculty was the proletariat. He was a rebel. He loved academic freedom in the classroom and encouraged his students to exercise their own. He persuaded his students to follow the truth to the end. Often he would quote Jesus who once said "You will know the truth and the truth will make you free!" (John 8:32, NASB).

Lumsden's biggest professional disappointment was leaving the faculty of the University of Florida due to his appointment being funded with soft money.

Among Lumsden's greatest professional joys was starting a new program. In 1997 he conceptualized and launched a very successful collaborative doctoral program involving Dallas Theological Seminary and the University of North Texas (Lumsden, 2008). With a \$1,000,000 gift from a well-heeled donor in Dallas, Texas, he founded at the University of North Texas the Bill J. Priest Center for Community College Education.



Another joy of his was working with students who were first generation doctoral students, shepherding them through their programs and watching them succeed. The writer of this article is one of many students who has great appreciation and admiration of Dr. Lumsden's contributions to higher education. Professionally, Lumsden has few equals. He towers above most of his peers in relationship to the scholarship he has produced over his career. Personally, Lumsden has suffered much physically due to his deteriorating health. He has also experienced much emotional disappointment in his personal and professional life. However, Lumsden has tirelessly and unceasingly exemplified the life of a professor in the eyes of his students. He has mentored his students to envision goals and dreams beyond themselves. He never fails to encourage them to stretch themselves and to develop for themselves visions of their futures. Lumsden's love for his students was evident. He was a great mentor to them. He walked the walk of a major professor. Lumsden's contributions to the development of his students may be his greatest contribution to Higher Education. His legacy

will forever live in the lives of his students. It is no small wonder, then, that Phi Delta Kappa once recognized Professor Lumsden as one of America's outstanding educators.

Thanks, Buck, for making my own doctoral experience an awesome one. It was a fun trip, man. One I shall remember and relish with fondness all the remaining days of my life. To tell the truth, I hated to see it come to an end. And thanks, Sir, for your steadfast caring and confidence in your students. You have set the bar high for each of us.

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[1] Personal interview January, 14, 2008

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