

Standing at the door: Blessing or blocking?

John Kinney's message to student personnel administrators at an April 2015 conference offers valuable insights for all theological educators about relationships with students. Read excerpts below, or watch the video.

"The very nature of the geophysical and even the metaphysical world is dynamism characterized by change. . . . So what shocks you when things are moving? . . . It is the fundamental character of the creator we honor to keep things in motion. And it is tragic that the two critical institutions that ought to be celebrating the motion are sometimes centers of obstructionism, obscurantism, and stagnation—churches and theological institutions. If God is the author of motion, then why are we standing still?"

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"Are seminaries going to be led by blockers or blessers? . . . People are not running away from seminary. . . . They are looking for seminary. . . . The larger community is raising the question, How does the existence of the seminary or a center of theological education contribute or invest in the community and the church? . . . They're even coming with visions and dreams. . . . But when they get to our doors, . . . there are blockers who are cutting off people who are crying out for what we have to offer. . . . Isn't it tragic that many institutions define excellence by who they exclude rather than who they empower, educate, and elevate? . . ."

John Kinney is Senior Vice President and Dean at Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia.



[Watch the full 39-minute video.](#)

"Where are the good schools who are willing to recognize the nature of the world we live in and recognize that many of the people who are called to serve are not going through the normative process of preparation, the normative criteria . . . when theological education was defined by an elite group rather than the needs of the world and the church? . . . Do we stand at the door and block, or do we take the countenance of the one who is at the core of our Christian tradition and say, Give them to me. . . . This is not just a new policy about admission; this is a metanoia of consciousness and the transformation of community, because if you make the simplistic welcome and then don't have programs, a spirit, attitudes, and values that assign value to the people you welcome, you welcome their presence but you don't honor their being. . . . Education is drawing out of the learner what you affirm that is already in them."

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"Does the seminary have a possibility of being the community that even the church won't be?"