

Biographical Summary for Robert John Beeson

Born in Hornell, New York, I am the eldest of the three children born to John and Eva Beeson. My childhood was spent in a number of upstate New York communities. After graduating from public high school, I enrolled in Erie Community College and graduated with an Associate in Arts degree in Liberal Arts. Two years later I transferred to Buffalo State College where I received a degree in philosophy. I then enrolled in Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. where I earned a Master of Divinity degree after three years, and a Doctor of Ministry degree three years after that. After leaving seminary I was ordained and served parishes in Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York and Florida. I also served as a part-time chaplain at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Canandaigua. After nineteen years, I left the ministry and began teaching philosophy and humanities at what was then Edison Community College in Fort Myers, Florida. During this period I enrolled in a Ph.D. program in philosophy at the University of South Florida in Tampa, and graduated in 2008.

Community college was a formative experience in my life. Throughout high school, and to a lesser extent during my undergraduate education, I was an underachieving and indifferent student. It was at Erie that I met some of the most interesting and gifted professors I've ever known. Through their nurturing I slowly, and at first almost imperceptibly, acquired the intellectual curiosity that refined my scholastic interests, fueled my graduate studies, and transformed me into a lifelong learner. When the opportunity to teach at Edison presented itself I was elated, recalling the significant changes that a similar college had wrought in me. After several successful and rewarding years in the classroom, I reluctantly entered college administration as an Associate Dean. After a year, I was promoted to Dean, then to District Dean, and finally to Campus Vice President. I have, however, kept a teaching schedule throughout most of the nearly eight years I have been an administrator as a way of being reminded that instruction is the essential work of any teaching college, and that to lose sight of that singular fact, or to become estranged from that primary task, is to risk defilement of the educational mission.

My professional life has tended to blur the distinction between student and educator; I have been a pupil for most of my fifty-eight years. I have maintained a rigorous program of professional development that has recently included training in assessment, faculty evaluation, critical thinking, leadership, and management. I have post-graduate certifications in family systems evaluation and clinical based counseling and am presently enrolled in a distance-learning certificate program. Professional development is one of my core values. It is something that has not only made me more proficient in my work, but has enriched my life. As a result, I am a zealous advocate of continuing education for administrators and faculty, and a strong defender of staff development resourcing. During the past couple of years I was privileged to have a lead role in the establishment of a Teaching and Learning Center at Edison that provides a regular schedule of training programs.

Another of my many areas of interest is faculty/management relations. At Edison I served on the collective negotiations committee that met monthly to discuss emerging issues and set agenda for bargaining sessions. As the only administrator at Edison to have been a former faculty union member I enjoyed an unusual level of faculty trust, and was often called upon to serve as a liaison between management and the faculty. I am a firm believer in the principles of shared governance, the benefits of a clear contract, and the values of fairness and compromise.

I hope that this brief statement has given you some idea of who I am, what I find interesting, and what I value. I look forward to the opportunity to share more on these and other related subjects.