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### **Administrative Leadership During Crisis in Higher Education: Absorbing Chaos, Giving Calm, and Providing Hope - A Phenomenological Case Study**

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ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP DURING CRISIS IN HIGHER EDUCATION:  
ABSORBING CHAOS, GIVING CALM, AND PROVIDING HOPE  
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CASE STUDY

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A thesis

Presented to

The School of Social Sciences, Education & Business

Department of Higher Education and Student Development

Taylor University

Upland, Indiana

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Development

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by

Eryn Lynn Marburger

May 2022

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**Higher Education and Student Development  
Taylor University  
Upland, Indiana**

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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MASTER'S THESIS

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This is to certify that the Thesis of

Eryn Lynn Marburger

Entitled

Administrative Leadership During Crisis in Higher Education:  
Absorbing Chaos, Giving Calm, and Providing Hope  
A Phenomenological Case Study

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the

Master of Arts degree  
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## Abstract

Encountering crises is inevitable when working with people, and while higher education institutions tend to operate in systems, unique circumstances call for unique responses. This study sought to understand the experiences of a university president and the surrounding community after experiencing a campus crisis. This study utilized the 2006 van accident at Taylor University as a case study. The researcher used a phenomenological case study approach and design to interview thirteen people who were directly involved as administrators, senior level leaders, student development faculty, academic faculty, staff, students, or members of the board of trustees. The findings of this study describe aspects of the crisis management that worked well for Taylor University at that specific time. The results show specific leadership qualities of Dr. Eugene and Mrs. Marylou Habecker, the president and first lady at the time of the accident. Themes relating to their personalities, their actions, and how they involved other people were the most prevalent. Additionally, the results show how Taylor University, a unique campus culture of student-focused faculty and staff, contributed to the specialized crisis response, including being well prepared. Furthermore, the findings emphasize that the role the Christian faith played in how the institution and individuals experienced this crisis is paramount to understanding the motives behind decisions that were made and their impact. Additionally, the study provided principles for other administrative leaders who experience crisis in their institutions. This research will inform policy and practice for how to approach crisis leadership during a specific case but may be applicable and

transferrable to a variety of circumstances that may appear at colleges and universities around the world.

## Acknowledgements

One of the many blessings from this project has been the way I have experienced collaboration in research. I have so much gratitude for those who have come alongside me during the last two years—people who have been gracious with their time, in conversation, in the sharing of skills and ideas. I could not have done it without each of you, so thank you.

My family has been incredible. To Mom and Dad, Aunt Mare, Grandma, all of my siblings, nieces, and nephews: thank you for cheering me on, encouraging me to press in, and loving me no matter what. Thank you for supporting this dream and celebrating with me. I love you to the moon and back!

To Nick: Thank you for sticking with me through many questions and encouraging me every day. God has given me so many gifts through Taylor, you being the greatest of them all. I'm so excited for our next season of marriage!

To my Committee: Skip, Dara, and Ashely. I appreciate each of you and your guidance along the way. Thank you for supporting me with this idea, especially considering the personal connection you each had with this story. Skip, you were an amazing Chair, and I'm so thankful for the opportunity to do this good work alongside you.

To the MAHE faculty: Tim, Kelly, Drew, Skip, Todd, Dara, Scott, Debby, and Kim. You have guided me in kind and challenging ways. Thank you for how you deeply care for each student you've been entrusted with. It's been a joy to learn with you and to work with you in the MAHE office.

To Cohort XIV: You guys are the best in every way. I am better because of the things you've taught me during the past two years. Thank you for being dear friends.

To Gene and Marylou: Truly, this project would have never happened without your support and participation. It was an honor to learn from you and to celebrate God's faithfulness with you.

To my participants: Thank you for your courage and willingness to step into hard spaces. I am hopeful this project serves as another point of healing for you and that you were reminded of Truth along the way.

To Mr. Dan: You have spent countless hours reading and editing my work. Thank you for your patience and commitment to my study. You were the first friend I made in Upland and I will miss being your neighbor.

To the many other friends and family who have cheered me on and shaped me in special ways: Hailey and Chad, Donna and "J", Heather, Bev, Julia, the CIU Student Life team, and so many others not listed. I am grateful.

To my faithful God: He has truly carried me through this experience. He is faithful. May this research be used to glorify Him.



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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

*“Effective leaders have to do multiple things well... in crisis situations, three things must be done exceptionally well: absorb chaos, give calm, and provide hope.”*

Dr. Eugene B. Habecker  
(Habecker, 2018, p. 17)

There are both great joys and great challenges surrounding administrative leadership in higher education. Many factors influence how one can successfully lead. Each institution has its own culture and set of values as well as specific focus areas and individualized missions. Unexpected events can happen that drastically change the trajectory of a leader’s influence and focus. Each day holds its own opportunities to respond to the urgent and important needs.

Understandably, there is not a precise, exhaustive list of rules that each university president is able to follow when responding to crises. Events such as natural disasters, campus shootings, or even a global pandemic must be responded to in ways that are as unique as the campuses and communities that are affected by them. However, there is wisdom in learning from those who have gone before; their leadership successes and failures can shape the way we respond to crises moving forward.

The purpose of this research is to tell and interpret an institutionally well-known story from a new perspective. On April 26, 2006, four students and one staff member from Taylor University were tragically killed in a van accident. The group was returning to Taylor’s main campus in Upland, Indiana, after preparing for an inauguration banquet

on the Fort Wayne campus honoring their new president, Dr. Eugene B. Habecker. A tractor-trailer traveling north crossed over the median of I-69 and struck the side of the university van, throwing the passengers from the vehicle. Students Laurel Erb, Brad Larson, Betsy Smith, and Laura Van Ryn, and Monica Felver, a staff member, were killed at the scene. Vickie Rhodes, Connie Magers, Michelle Miller (staff members) and Whitney Cerak (a freshman student), suffered serious injuries, but survived.

Taylor University is known for championing intentional community, but when this deep sense of love for one another exists, it also means a deep sense of grief occurs in the midst of tragedy. There was no detailed manual to deal with a crisis of this magnitude, especially considering the preparations already underway for the inauguration of Dr. Habecker. Decisions had to be made quickly. The Taylor community had to meet their grief headlong. Parents had to be contacted, counselors had to be available, and classes were cancelled. Communication had to be clear and accurate. Immediate action was required but there was no established plan to execute.

Even more, five weeks after the accident, there was widespread shock to discover there had been a mistake at the accident scene, as two of the bodies were misidentified. Whitney Cerak had actually survived the accident and had been in a coma, being cared for by the Van Ryn family, whose daughter Laura had in fact died at the scene of the accident.

The news of the mistaken identity spread around the world and gained attention from popular news media outlets such as Dateline, 20/20, Oprah, The Today Show, and *People* magazine. What has not been reported on, to the same extent, is the effect that the accident had on the Taylor University community. What happened as a result of the

accident? How did the university respond to the grieving parents, the shocked student body, and the curious media who swarmed campus? In particular, what steps did Dr. Habecker take to lead his beloved university through this tragedy in his first year as president? How did others experience his administrative leadership through this tragedy? These ponderings guide the research questions for this thesis: What is the experience of a university president during crisis in higher education? How do others—students, faculty, staff, senior level leaders, and board of trustees members—experience presidential leadership in the midst of crises? More specifically, how did Dr. Habecker manage the van accident crisis and, subsequently, the mistaken identity that followed? As the face of the institution, what did Dr. Habecker do that helped the Taylor community both grieve and also look to the future?

News articles, video clips, email communication, and personal letters from the University Archives were all used to gain a broader understanding of the details of the accident. Notably, in 2009 the Van Ryn and Cerak families co-authored a book, *Mistaken Identity: Two Families, One Survivor, Unwavering Hope*, to share their experience and to testify about God's goodness despite their tragic loss. These sources served as a first-hand look at the personal stories and details of April 26, 2006, and the following weeks.

### **Dr. Eugene B. Habecker**

Dr. Eugene B. Habecker, or Gene, as he prefers to be called, is now President Emeritus of Taylor University, where he served as President from 2005 to 2016. Before becoming the 30<sup>th</sup> president of Taylor, Dr. Habecker served as the president of the American Bible Society and president of Huntington University. He was born on June 17,

1946 in Hershey, Pennsylvania. He earned a B.A. from Taylor University in 1968, a M.A. from Ball State University in 1969, a J.D. from Temple University in 1973, and a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1981. Dr. Habecker has worked in higher education for many years, including positions in student affairs and athletics at George Fox University and Eastern University. Gene has been married to Marylou, also a 1968 graduate of Taylor University, since 1968, and together they have three married children and seven grandchildren. Most recently, Gene served as Chairman of the Board at *Christianity Today*.

### **Taylor University**

Taylor University is a small, faith-based, liberal arts institution located in Upland, Indiana. It was founded in 1846 and has continued as a coeducational, non-denominational Christian liberal arts college centered around the integration of faith and learning. During his tenure as president, Dr. Habecker raised over \$160 million for endowment and capital projects and led the campus through the construction of major facilities including the Memorial Prayer Chapel, the Euler Science Complex, and the LaRita Boren Campus Center, as well as residence hall enhancements.

The biography of Dr. Habecker and history of Taylor University provide context for this study. Higher education administrative leadership in crisis can be approached in a variety of ways. The following study about crisis leadership reveals one approach that an administrator may take, but the context of the institution and situation should be considered when making decisions.

### **Higher Education Administrative Leadership in Crisis**

Higher education leaders are responsible for the care of their campus community while carrying out their institutional mission. It is a challenging task in today's media-saturated world, and there is ample possibility for circumstances and information to be miscommunicated. There is always risk in leadership but a senior level leader in higher education risks heightened exposure if a mistake is made; there are personal and institutional consequences. Presidential leadership in higher education requires a holistic commitment to the mission of the institution and to the welfare of the student body above all else.

Higher education presidential administration must encompass research, teaching, and the development of students. Good administrative leaders care about both people and scholarship, both teaching and learning. They must have a commitment to the larger institution as the highest representation and an embodiment of the institution's mission and vision (Longman, 2012). This demanding work of balancing the "social, emotional, political, and economic challenges" (Longman, 2012, p. 17) can be especially challenging in light of campus community crises.

Leading through crisis is an inherent reality of an administrator in higher education. It involves seeing a bigger picture than the current circumstances. It thrives on a solid foundation of trust, exposes resiliency and encourages hope through trials, and requires a strong team of people using their gifts for the greater good. While there is no universal checklist of what to do when a crisis occurs, there are examples of men and women who have weathered many leadership storms. Whether it be the tragic death of a student or a natural disaster, there are characteristics embodied by higher education administrators that shape the communities they lead. Leadership has the power to



transform lives, and undoubtedly, experiencing trials will expose qualities in someone that will either move them towards floundering or flourishing.

### **Considerations**

The accident on April 26, 2006, was an unparalleled and life-altering event for many people. The victims' families, as well as the Taylor community as a whole, have had to face unimaginable grief over the past sixteen years. While the hope here is to draw significant conclusions that could be helpful to others who may find themselves in similar situations, this research should not be regarded as prescriptive for all university administrators. It is specific to Taylor University, and while Dr. Habecker is a proven, respected leader, his approach or leadership style may not work for every institution. Taylor University did a lot of things well, but to be clear, it is important to communicate that things were not addressed flawlessly. When faced with a crisis, each senior level leader should consider their own leadership style, unique gifts, approach to the situation, institutional mission and vision, and goals.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this research is to examine the leadership of Dr. Eugene Habecker during his ten-year presidency at Taylor University. The research tells the untold stories of those who were under Dr. Habecker's care, specifically during and after the van accident crisis. The research process provided a way of bringing to light the qualities and characteristics that made Dr. Habecker successful, specifically while leading the Taylor community through the tragic events of April and May 2006. The goal is to better understand how the students, faculty, staff, senior leaders, and members of the board of trustees experienced Dr. Habecker's leadership. Furthermore, the research draws

conclusions and provides principles from which leaders who find themselves in unanticipated crises can glean and learn. The literature review that follows provides examples and perspectives of how to do that as a leader in an organization and specifically, within higher education.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

*“...This is anything but a normal day and for us to pretend it to be normal would be foolhardy. As I have looked around this room and I have seen our students and I have seen our faculty and I have seen delegates from all over the US and parts of the world, I’ve said to myself ‘How like God’ ... Universities are staffed for normal situations... We are not in a normal situation right now. We are on overload. And how like God to have already arranged on a weekend like this to send dozens and hundreds of our friends and colleagues from all over to come and help hold up our hands... I thank God that even in this difficult moment, he has sent all of you to our midst these days. Including our wonderful trustees and family members to be with us this day and to help hold up our hands. How like God.”*

Dr. Eugene B. Habecker at his Inaugural Address, April 2006

In our world, crises and leadership challenges in any sphere of influence are inevitable. No crisis should be ignored or pushed aside; they demand attention and an intentional response from all leaders within an institution. Such situations present opportunities for growth among leadership and the communities they serve. Responses to crises can be teachable moments that deeply impact decisions and how the organization moves forward.

In higher education, an institution’s response to tragedy is an especially integral factor in the holistic development of the student. The administration’s response is weighty; it has the power to deeply influence the community positively but can also change the trajectory of the student experience in a negative way. Understanding academic administrative leadership during crisis is complex. Though a singular, prescriptive response does not exist, it is important to understand the value of authentic

leadership in the midst of trial. When approached thoughtfully and purposefully, confident leadership through crisis can have a great impact individually and corporately.

Some literature included in this study shows broad aspects of crisis leadership and management. These principles could be applied to anyone facing an unexpected situation. Other parts of the literature are specific to educators serving in colleges and universities. There is a specific section surrounding Christian higher education. This literature serves as a foundation to synthesizing the rest of the study and analyzing the results.

### **Servant Leadership and Self-Awareness**

In 2022, it is difficult to imagine crisis response outside of the context of the recent and ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Fernandez and Shaw (2020) write extensively on servant leadership as it relates to the pandemic response, but their perspective is valuable and applicable to crisis response of any type, especially for Christian leaders. Servant leaders place a strong emphasis on empowerment, involvement, collaboration with a team, and care of others. Emotional intelligence and stability are paramount during the crisis response and afterwards, as these situations are often stressful, complicated, and drawn out (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020). Crisis leadership involves more than just saying the right thing to the right people to uphold an individual's or an institution's reputation. A leader must have a strong sense of self-identity and confidence as well as know their team well. This mutual trust serves as an anchor point throughout the decision-making process. Successful leaders are able to substantiate the experiences of others while effectively leading through expression of their own emotions (Gigliotti, 2020).

Successful leaders can distribute leadership responsibilities and clearly delegate roles to improve decision making; charismatic leadership on its own is not enough

(Fernandez & Shaw, 2020). This also helps ensure that the decision making does not fall upon one single person but provides a “checks and balances” system. Fernandez and Shaw (2020) write,

Without mutual trust, there can be no transformative change. Some academic leaders may even use the crisis as a catalyst to re-establish dormant relationships, and reach out to establish new relationships with those who hold contrary views, those from the ambivalent majority, as well as those considered confidants, who can often provide a genuine reality check for the academic leader.

The most effective leaders lead from a place of authenticity and have established trust prior to the need for a crisis response. “Effective leadership during times of crisis requires a dual focus on triaging immediate needs while also making strategic decisions that serve the long-term interests of one’s unit, department, or institution” (Gigliotti, 2020).

### **Reflective Action**

Successful leaders in crisis situations also take the opportunity to grow and evolve during a crisis (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020). They display a sense of immediacy in a way that highlights their flexibility and commitment to adaptability. Gigliotti (2016) encourages leaders to reflect and to facilitate reflection among the community which has suffered loss. He also recommends reframing crisis situations as opportunities to learn, grow, and make changes where needed. Sometimes crisis situations bring to light significant areas for growth in an organization (Gigliotti, 2016). Leaders also look for ways to prepare and make decisions in the present that will help in the future. While there are situations for which one can never fully prepare, it is always beneficial to have a crisis response plan in place (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020).

## **Crisis Communication**

Effective leaders communicate clearly and frequently to all stakeholders through a variety of channels. In today's world, organizations should hear from their leaders through multiple venues such as email, emergency text response, personal communication, and social media (Gigliotti, 2016). Messages should be consistent whenever possible, staying relevant and appropriate to the audience. Leaders should also communicate with all levels of the organization to keep the message clear (Gigliotti, 2016). "Communication in a crisis is a delicate balancing act; too much and the message is tuned out, too little may prompt concern and anxiety" (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020). While a difficult feat, leaders in crisis situations must try to capture the layers and complexities of the situation while making sense of what is happening (Gigliotti, 2016).

DeCosmo (2019) notes that though higher education crisis situations can take many forms, administrators must be prepared to communicate in a way that builds up the institution in a positive light. Missing the mark in this way could put the institution at risk. Effective and immediate communication following a crisis has never been more imperative than in today's social media saturated world. In specific situations regarding accidents on campus or involving members from the campus community, crisis communication should be focused on the lives and families impacted (DeCosmo, 2019).

## **Higher Education Administrative Leadership in Crisis**

"It is in the darkness and chaos of crisis where values-based leadership becomes most critical, most visible, and most desired" (Gigliotti, 2020). Higher education administrators who lead through crises are responsible for the care of their campus community while being on display to a watching world. Any misstep or word misspoken

can be taken out of context and inflated online. Responding to anything in a way that could be taken out of context or be offensive to someone can be detrimental to the institution's reputation and future success. Being an administrator in today's culture requires a deep commitment to mission of the institution and to the good of the student body above all else.

Higher education administration requires bridging the gap between research and teaching. It is a distinctive role that is neither higher nor lower than faculty status, but is simply different, and must be approached differently.

Academic leadership merits our attention as good, noble, and necessary work—necessary and welcomed, for the sake of the quality and character of academic institutions. It is neither a higher calling nor a lower calling nor a mere necessary chore. It is an avenue for shaping the contours of the teaching-learning process.

(Longman, 2012, p. 16)

Good administrative leaders care about both people and scholarship, both teachers and learners. They must have a commitment to the larger institution, as the highest representation and an embodiment of the institution's mission and vision (Longman, 2012). This demanding work of balancing the "social, emotional, political, and economic challenges" (Longman, 2012, p. 17) can be especially challenging considering campus community crises.

Responding to any negative experience, including a life-altering crisis, has the power to be a tremendous teachable moment to those watching. Fulfilling the calling of faithfulness to the institution is also of great value. Doing both tasks simultaneously is not for the faint of the heart and requires the utmost commitment from finite individuals

(Longman, 2012). Effective leadership demands a continual evaluation of present circumstances and a willingness to adapt and adjust to the ever-changing and dynamic needs of a campus (Treadwell & O'Grady, 2019). Crisis response provides the opportunity both to represent the institution well and also to care deeply for those affected. These are teachable moments that must not be taken for granted or wasted, though they are delicate, complicated, and often unprecedented. The literature reveals that, at their core, Christian higher education administrators who are charged with crisis response must assume a higher perspective, stand on a trustworthy foundation, exemplify resiliency, and lean into supportive relationships.

### *A Higher Perspective*

Higher education administrators responding to crises must maintain a higher perspective; they require leadership abilities that allow them to see the bigger picture. One must have the self-awareness and emotional maturity to welcome a gamut of possibilities in any given day (Longman, 2012). From routine concerns to emergency calls to public relation nightmares, leaders at this level have the potential to experience extreme highs and lows; circumstances can change in an instant. The average day can be daunting considering the gamut of unanticipated experiences that can arise (Treadwell & O'Grady, 2019).

Embodying a higher perspective requires the administrator to remember their humanity and feel the weight of the crisis the campus is facing while simultaneously calling the community toward healing and the future. There is often little time or opportunity to fully process realities before the campus community needs to be addressed. The students, faculty, and staff may follow in stride with the administrator's



response, so the leader must be poised and prepared to address the issue while also reminding those watching of the bigger picture. It is not just staying positive and saying something like, “everything will be okay;” but rather, it is a quiet confidence that establishes trust amongst the community, providing hope for the future even if it is unknown or challenging (Longman, 2012).

### ***A Trustworthy Foundation***

Administrative leadership amidst crisis is most successful when leaders are trusted by those who are following.

Crises never happen when we expect, and we never have the emergency response plans in our hands when we need them. All we can do is focus on restoring community safety, creating a compassionate environment, and guiding our campus toward doing the right thing each step of the journey. (Treadwell & O’Grady, 2019, p. 16)

In reality, there is no convenient time for a crisis to happen. Trust is key to ensuring that there will be a healthy response by both the leaders and the campus community since trials tend to be unexpected and generate feelings of being unprepared. Having the ability to respond in a way that validates what the campus is going through in a meaningful and genuine way is of utmost importance but is also highly difficult. A trustworthy foundation on which people can rest will benefit individuals and the institution as a whole.

Humility and teachability are also key for those under one’s leadership, especially in the midst of traumatic situations.

While leadership sets the tone in an institution, modeling it for students requires a teachable spirit. We simply don't know, or have to know, everything.

Consequently, we can value and show gratitude to others who have more expertise. And when a leader shows the grace to defer to others, those around often extend grace back to that leader, and to each other (Longman, 2012, p. 130).

One cannot be expected to know exactly how to respond to every situation, though time and life experience do inform one's response to tragedy. A leader's maturity and self-awareness play a significant role in how comfortable and confident community members feel during a crisis (Longman, 2012).

### ***Exemplifying Resiliency***

Leaders who respond to crises on university campuses should be examples of resiliency. While it takes time and experience to build resiliency, it is a skill that will serve institutions well in the face of trials. Resilient leaders are able to absorb crises out of their control while simultaneously moving forward, casting a vision for where they are headed despite the circumstances.

Thriving leaders see the situation around them differently. They interpret crises in a way that enables them to remain hopeful, engaged, and striving toward meaningful goals. Rather than being crushed by adversity, flourishing leaders are challenged by it. They take adversity in stride and learn from it. They may struggle during a crisis, but they do not get stuck there or become defined by it (Longman, 2012, p. 41).

Resilient leaders are able to take the crisis at face value while also providing stability and hope. They have the capacity bounce back and move forward with joy even if they do not

know exactly how the future will pan out. Their team feels a sense of calm knowing that under their leadership, they will not crumble or flounder.

### *Leaning into Relationships*

While each of these characteristics is valuable, the most important of all may be the necessity of mutually supportive and beneficial relationships. Building a team that is equipped to respond to crisis and able to lean into one another amid trials is of utmost importance. There is considerable value in having a diverse team built with life and professional experiences that equip them to respond to crises (Treadwell & O'Grady, 2019). Having a team that is in harmony both personally and professionally will provide the support system needed at the leadership level when crisis is especially difficult and personal.

Relationships on the leadership team are vital but so are relationships in the greater institutional community. When friends of Taylor University made plans to gather to celebrate the inauguration of Dr. Habecker as Taylor's next president, nobody could have prepared for what the day would hold, or how different it would look despite the many months of careful preparation. While the campus community was grieving the loss of four students and one staff member, Dr. Habecker had to address the inauguration crowd, many of whom traveled to campus for the celebrations. As part of his revised inaugural address, he said,

How like God, that just when we need to be reminded of his love and comfort, he would send all of you to look into our students' eyes and to give them a hug, reminding them that there is a family of faith surrounding them in this time of loss.

Dr. Habecker was able to truly feel and validate the grief that the Taylor community was experiencing, but he was also able to see the ways God had been faithful. Even more than seeing, he took the opportunity to thank God and praise Him for His timing in providing the Taylor community with an additional layer of support during the tragic loss.

### **A Response From Christian Higher Education**

While success of universities or, more specifically, students, cannot be guaranteed, there are ways that leaders in higher education have the opportunity to walk alongside students and point them in the right direction. Though success is difficult to consistently measure, higher education administrators tend to track success merely by retention rates, GPAs, and prestigious internships secured, though this is only part of the larger picture of a quality education (Jensen & Visser, 2019). For Christian leaders and educators, success is often the internal growth students experience in their souls. Given the belief that such growth has eternal implications, it cannot always be defined or fully known in this life. In light of these convictions, success can be defined as “the faithful stewardship of our gifts, energy, opportunities, and struggles toward the aim of greater good” (Jensen & Visser, 2019, p. 144). This will be the lens through which this thesis approaches administrative leadership and the context from which effective responses to crisis are suggested.

While being confronted with trials is never easy, it is comforting to know that Christians do not grieve as those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Christian institutions have a responsibility to support students through their grief. At a community-wide level, it is especially difficult to walk alongside people during such formative moments of their lives.

It is not, therefore, the *experience* of loss that becomes the defining moment of our lives, for that is as inevitable as death, which is the last loss awaiting us all. It is how we *respond* to loss that matters. That response will largely determine the quality, the direction, and the impact of our lives. (Sittser, 1995, p. 9)

Christian leaders have an opportunity to nurture development of students during an especially meaningful season of life. Grief at any point of life is powerful and must be leveraged, as best as possible, in hope. It is a delicate and potentially traumatic experience but has the power to be formative and used for good in the lives of the persons within the campus community.

### **Conclusion**

It takes a gifted individual to lead an institution at any time but leading a campus community through tragic loss takes an extraordinary amount of grace, resiliency, authenticity, and courage. While no leader is perfect, it is imperative to recognize the value of strong leadership principles that must be expressed to successfully lead through crisis. The potential of a leader to influence his or her followers throughout a crisis is immense and should not be taken lightly. The research methods that guided this study were intentionally designed to tell the story of how Dr. Habecker and the Taylor University team responded to the crisis they faced and provide principles for how others could take a similar approach.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

*“I think people think you’re a leader, so you’re strong and you have it all together. And I think one of the things that we’re not is, you know, is we’re... we have emotions and feelings and are very broken as well... to be able to be broken with that group that night. You know, weeping. I mean, literally, I couldn’t even... I think we both just couldn’t even stand up. We were just kneeling at the front along a bench and our chair just crying. And having students hop over those auditorium chairs and holding us was so powerful... we needed them. And they needed us. And that bound us together for the rest of our days. It changed us inside out as well.”*

Mrs. Marylou Habecker

This study was designed to provide a new perspective on a locally well-known story. While the April 2006 story made international news, nobody has yet researched it from the perspective of higher education crisis leadership. This chapter outlines the methodological design, provides additional context for the study, describes the participants, details the procedures of data collection, and explains the data analysis process.

### Research Approach and Design

To best understand this study and get the full scope of each element involved, a qualitative approach was used for the research. More specifically, it was a phenomenological case study. A phenomenological design helped discover the essence of this experience (Creswell, 2013). No two people experienced the van accident and the Taylor University leadership in the same way, thus getting a variety of people in different professional positions was vital to understanding the larger experience of a community.

The case study approach is exploratory of a group, where a researcher explores “a real-life, contemporary bounded system or multiple bounded systems over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). Collecting data through semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A) helped the researcher learn stories of the experiences of those who lived through this tragedy. From this information, themes arose which will help inform policy and practice for higher education administrators in the future. Time spent reviewing various documents in the University Archives at Taylor University helped ensure the interview protocol was focused and confirmed details that arose during the interviews.

### **Context**

Since the research relies heavily on Dr. Eugene Habecker’s presidency at Taylor University from 2005 to 2016, it is valuable to consider the full tenure of his administrative leadership. More specifically, the research led to focus upon Dr. Habecker’s personality and leadership style, his distinct partnership with Marylou, and how their response to crisis impacted those under their care.

Taylor University is a faith-based, liberal arts institution of about 2,000 students located in Upland, Indiana. It was founded in 1846 and has emerged as a coeducational, non-denominational Christian liberal arts college centered around the integration of faith and learning. During his tenure as president, Dr. Habecker raised over \$160 million for endowment and capital projects, led the campus through the construction of major facilities including the Memorial Prayer Chapel, the Euler Science Complex, and the LaRita Boren Campus Center, as well as residence halls and their enhancements. This research focused on Dr. Habecker’s presidency and his legacy in the years beyond. Using

the tragic van accident from April 26, 2006, as a case study for understanding the impact that crises have on institutions and the administrator's response, the data collected were a result of participants' reflections and perspectives from 2006 to 2022. In addition, institutional archival records provided context for Dr. Habecker's presidency and the time surrounding the van accident (see Appendix B for note).

### **The Van Accident and the Mistaken Identity**

On April 26, 2006, four students and one staff member from Taylor University were tragically killed in a van accident. The group was returning to Taylor's main campus in Upland, Indiana, after preparing for an inauguration banquet to celebrate Dr. Eugene B. Habecker, whose term as president had commenced several months earlier. A tractor-trailer traveling north crossed over the median of I-69 and struck the side of the university van, throwing the passengers from the vehicle. Four students and one staff member were killed at the scene. Three staff members and one student survived. Taylor University is known for championing intentional community, but when this deep sense of love for one another exists, it also means a deep sense of grief occurs in the midst of tragedy.

Five weeks after the accident, the world was shocked to discover there had been a mistake at the scene, and two of the bodies were misidentified. Whitney Cerak had actually survived the accident and had been in a coma, being cared for by the Van Ryn family. Laura Van Ryn, a senior, had died at the scene of the accident. Brad Larson, Betsy Smith, Laurel Erb, Laura Van Ryn, students; and Monica Felver, a staff member, were killed at the scene. Vickie Rhodes, Connie Magers, Michelle Miller, staff members; and Whitney Cerak (a freshman), suffered serious injuries but survived.



## Participants

Because of the contextual nature of this research topic, participants were selected based on their involvement, professional position, and exposure both to Dr. Habecker as president and to the crisis that led to his leadership decisions as president. Twelve participants were interviewed from the following categories: Administrators, Senior Level Leaders, Students, Faculty, Staff, and the Board of Trustees. Dr. Eugene Habecker was interviewed twice, once jointly with First Lady Marylou Habecker. Participants were categorized based on the role they held in 2006.

**Table 1**

*Research Participants and Their Descriptions*

Category	Demographic	Job Titles
Administrators	1 male, 1 female	President and First Lady
Senior Level Leaders	3 males	Provost, VP for Business & Finance, Dean of Students
Board of Trustees	1 male	Board Member
Academic Faculty	1 male, 1 female	Academic Faculty
Student Development Faculty	2 males	Residence Hall Director, Campus Pastor
Staff	1 female	Executive Assistant to the President
Student	1 male	Student Body President Elect

## Procedures

The researcher spent time in the Taylor University Archives reviewing archival documents including chapel messages, inauguration addresses, Taylor University *Echo* articles, letters, and other university documents, which informed the interview protocol. Gaining this perspective helped inform the researcher's understanding of Dr. Habecker's character, leadership style, vision, and legacy as president of Taylor University shaped by

such a challenging season. This experience also informed the interview protocol and helped narrow the scope of what types of questions to ask during interviews. The researcher collected data through semi-structured interviews with purposefully sampled participants. Due to the nature of narrative research, specific and purposeful sampling permitted selection based on the relationship of the participant to the topic (Creswell, 2013).

Additionally, semi-structured interviews helped gain breadth and depth in this research, as participants shared personal memories and observations of Dr. Habecker through personal interaction with him and his influence upon them. The researcher asked all participants eight of the same questions, leaving room for participants to share from their individual role and perspective during the time of the crisis being studied. The remainder of the questions asked were specific to the participant's role and exposure to Dr. Habecker's leadership. Additional questions were used to interview Dr. and Mrs. Habecker that were more pertinent to their roles and involvement. The researcher utilized individual interviews to gain a greater depth of understanding from the interviewees.

Before conducting individual interviews, the researcher created a proposal for the Institutional Review Board at Taylor University. Once the proposal was approved, a pilot interview was conducted to test the value and clarity of questions. The pilot interview data are reflected in the research results. Upon collective brainstorming with the researcher's faculty advisor, a list of potential participants and the questions to be posed that addressed the research question were determined. The researcher then contacted potential participants via email. She provided a brief statement explaining the purpose of the research, explained why the participant is being considered, and asked if he or she

would like to participate. Then, the researcher distributed the informed consent agreement (Appendix C) and coordinated the details of the meeting place and time. Whenever possible, interviews were conducted in person, but several were conducted via Zoom due to location restraints.

At each interview, the researcher began by presenting the informed consent document and obtained the participant's signature. The researcher audio recorded interviews, which lasted between thirty minutes and two hours. If an additional interview was needed, details were agreed upon after the conclusion of the initial interview. The researcher utilized specific interview protocol, but the semi-structured interviews provided space and flexibility for the interviewer to ask follow-up questions to better understand the topic being addressed based on the participants experiences and responses.

### **Data Analysis**

Once the interviews concluded, the researcher had the audio recordings professionally transcribed. Once receiving the transcriptions, the researcher reviewed the documents and listened to the recordings to further familiarize herself with the data and check for transcription accuracy. It should be noted that the punctuation in the quotations reflects editorial expression by the transcriber. The transcriptions were stored confidentially on the researcher's personal computer in a locked home or office. The audio recordings and transcriptions were destroyed upon the conclusion of the study to protect the participants.

After confirming the transcriptions were correct, the researcher coded the transcripts. From the codes, the researcher synthesized the data and derived themes. The codes and themes arose from the participants' similar responses based on specific

questions that were asked through the protocol or arose during the interview. As previously stated, the researcher followed a common protocol for all interviews, but the semi-structured approach left room for further questions. Interviews with the Habeckers included a separate set of questions due to the specific, first-person experience they had compared to other participants. Again, for preparation, the researcher conducted a pilot interview to ensure bias was minimized as much as possible (Creswell, 2013). The pilot interview helped provide feedback to improve the remaining interviews, and the data collected during the pilot interview were included in the overall results.

## Chapter 4

### Results

*“I think one of the keys to making it through that kind of a situation... if you are the president or the leader, you know, a lot of people focus on the CEO role or the COO role. I like to focus on the CLO role. You are the Chief Listening Officer... This kind of event triggers the need to listen in as many different ways as you possibly can to the Spirit’s leading, to the Lord’s voice. But also, listening to the people you’re spending time with around the leadership table, or with parents who had lost loved ones... and listening to their words but also their hearts... It’s in that listening experience, that you get a sense of the direction and the steps that you need to take.”*

Dr. Eugene B. Habecker

### Overview

A leader’s ability to respond to a crisis can impact his or her future, as well as the future of their organization. Poor response can be detrimental, while a healthy response can propel the institution forward and bring about positive change from a negative experience. The purpose of this study is to provide a fuller picture of crisis leadership after the April 26, 2006, van accident and subsequent mistaken identity that occurred involving members from the Taylor University community. The research was guided by the following questions:

1. What is the experience of a university president during a crisis in higher education?
2. How do others—administrators, students, faculty, staff, and members of the board of trustees—experience their leadership in the midst of crisis?

From the twelve people interviewed for this study, three major themes emerged from the research, with subthemes for each:

1. Gene and Marylou as leaders
  - a. Personality
  - b. Actions
  - c. Relationships with others
2. Taylor University as an institution
  - a. Campus culture
  - b. Preparedness
3. Overarching: Faith as foundational and the value of spiritual leadership

The first theme that resulted related to Gene and Marylou Habecker as leaders. Details about their personality, their actions, and how their relationships with others shaped their crisis response were discovered. The second theme that emerged is about Taylor University as an institution. Data surrounding the campus culture and details about how Taylor had prepared for crises at that point in time were uncovered. Lastly, it would be remiss not to mention the critical role that faith plays throughout crisis response, especially at a school like Taylor. Spiritual leadership is a value that can be seen in both themes. Even at non-faith-based institutions, it is important to note the ways character, ingrained values, and spirituality play a valuable role in how leaders care for others during crises. In this section, notice that the frequency for each theme given is out of 11 participants, though there were 13 participants total. In order to eliminate bias, the researcher did not include Gene and Marylou's responses frequency counts, since some of the themes related directly to Gene and Marylou themselves.

## **Gene and Marylou as Leaders**

The first theme that emerged from the research pertains to Gene and Marylou Habecker as leaders. Before further discussion, know that the initial plan for this research was to study Dr. Habecker as the President during this time at Taylor University. The first interview quickly showed that to only focus on Gene would be to only tell half of the story. There is no Gene without Marylou by his side, and vice versa. This presidency was truly a partnership. From this point moving forward, any mention of Gene should also be thought of in the context of Marylou as a vital part of the leadership team as well. Thus, 11 out of 11 participants mentioned specific details about how Gene and Marylou's personalities and relationship influenced how effective they were during this time.

### ***Personality***

The Habeckers are highly relational. They were truly a "student's president" and valued deep, personal relationships with many students across campus, knowing many by name. Dr. Habecker is also very pastoral and wanted to make it clear that he and Marylou cared holistically about students. To this day, Gene and Marylou call the families of the accident victims each year on April 26. He wants to remind parents that even though he is no longer president, he and the Taylor University community remember their son or daughter, and that they care deeply for the family. The Habeckers value legacy and desire to represent the university in recognizing the loss of life and the families who live with that reality each day. This conveys that they perceived students and families as more than constituents, but as persons to be valued.

Additionally, it is clear that Dr. Habecker's personality grew out of an extensive range of leadership experiences. He was a seasoned leader in higher education, working

at multiple institutions prior to Taylor, and even serving as a college president previously. Though he never practiced law, his law degree helped inform his response to the many questions from the media and helped guide his decisions in protecting both individuals and the institution after the accident. Participant 13, a board of trustees member, reflected on this as follows:

To dive into a situation like that, um, and, you know, be vulnerable and- and weep with people, and pray with people. And- and that's one of the things I admire, I continue to admire about Gene, is I think he has great range. Um, you know? He was well-trained to lead Taylor, you know, kind of this, um, business acumen, lawyer background. But at the same time, he, you know, and Marylou helped him with this. But he had this softer side, too. He could... He could... I mean, he's- he's cried in front of the board. He could, he could, um, you know, tears of joy, sometimes. Tears of anguish. You know, he had this, um, emotional vulnerability that I think are, is, you know, especially when you're going to lead a place like Taylor, that it's important to have that.

Dr. Habecker's inner being shines through his response to the tragic accident. He was not afraid to be vulnerable and show emotion to others, whether they were students, faculty, or the board of trustees. His and Marylou's ability to share that dimension of themselves with the Taylor community was powerful and gave permission to others to respond to their grief in a similar way.

### ***Actions***

A second subtheme to better understand Gene and Marylou as effective leaders is related to their actions. Ten out of 11 participants shared memories of Gene and



Marylou's actions, specifically in how they were present with the Taylor community. They were intentional to gather and show up in the difficult spaces. They were just as distraught in hearing the news of the accident and subsequent mistaken identity as anyone else on campus. Participant 8, a student development faculty member, recalls,

As Dr. Habecker spoke and, uh, and it became evident that there were fatalities and that, that had, um, um, that had been shared, um, uh, he shared vulnerably, uh, through tears, uh, through like quivering voice. I mean, he struggled to do that, but I, what I recall about that is it, uh, kind of gave us permission to grieve, uh, gave us permission to cry, to be sad. It was not, uh, it was not a moment that, um, that like this really stoic response was what was valued. He was kind of the lead griever. And, um, and I remember, um, I remember that, and I think that allowed us to kind of set a tone to, um, to grieve together. We didn't need to go somewhere else, uh, to grieve, like that could be introduced into this space because the president, the very leader of our institution set that tone. Um, I also think it's significant that, um, you know, the, the campus community knew or knows to gather three chapels a week. We gather in that space, we know to come together and that's always been something that has stood out to me in that, um, that, that, like something goes down, you come together. Um, that's not the moments when you have to split apart. That's not the moments when you have to feel on your own. Um, we came together and so those same kind of affinities that feel a, a little bit more flippant, like having friends to sit within chapel became like, nope, we have people with whom we know we can gather.

Participants also mentioned the ways that Gene was a clear communicator who sought to understand the facts. He served as the main spokesperson to the media and was able to delegate important roles to other senior level leaders. He would often ask, “What are the unshakable facts?” and encouraged his team not to work off assumptions. Crisis response starts with the unshakable facts. It was important that the team could rely on one another for accurate information. They regularly spent time together which paved the way for trust to be built and strengthened through the process of making a way forward.

### *People*

Six out of 11 participants reflected on the value that Gene and Marylou placed on people. The publicly exhibited partnership that Gene and Marylou had was rare for a college presidency. Marylou’s involvement helped show all of campus, but especially women, that she was there to serve as a caretaker, and in some ways, a motherly figure to the campus, especially during this time. It is impossible to talk about Gene’s leadership without also seeing the influential role that Marylou played as First Lady. Participant 5, a senior level leader, reflects on the partnership between Gene and Marylou:

I think Marylou’s just kind of a force in and of her own right... When you examine, you know, examine the presidents that I’ve worked with, theirs was a co-presidency more than any other I’ve seen. You know? I mean, it was... Yeah. I mean... I mean, they- they literally were partners in this thing, uh, and... Yeah. So I- I- I think it was critical. And I think from, uh, you know, my little bit more of an insider perspective, I- I think Gene was so strengthened by whom Marylou is, and I also think it was critically important for us as a campus, um, that Marylou kind of solidified as that campus leader for women. You know? ‘Cause they

didn't have any at that point, women vice-presidents. And I think that, uh, was a huge benefit, not just to Gene, because I think it was critical for him. I think it was for all of us to have that- that representative, uh, as kind of a part of our cabinet of leadership.

Gene and Marylou's distinctive partnership in the presidency was a key piece of crisis response during the van accident and subsequent mistaken identity. It would have been a vastly different experience had their relationship not entailed the deeply consonant partnership they demonstrated.

Gene also valued collaboration with his team. He trusted the team he had in place which helped free him up for jobs that only he could do as president. Participant 4, an academic faculty member, reflected saying,

[Dr. Habecker] was also very committed to um, a consensus style of leadership. Um, probably those of us who worked any length of time with Gene know that there were very few times, actually in all of his years of uh, as President... maybe no more... no more than a handful of times. Literally. A handful when Gene actually said "Okay. This is what we're gonna do." I know that, you know, "Regardless of what the rest of you think, this is what we're gonna do." For... For Gene, it was very important that um, decisions be made in the group and that ultimately everyone in the group come to a position in which they could support uh, whatever the policy was. Or whatever the action, uh, was gonna be. Uh, and uh... And foundational to all of this, Gene Habecker was a man of deep personal faith. And... and always had uh, in... in his mind that being the President is more-

is more than just about uh, the life of the mind. It's about uh, caretaking of the soul as uh, as well.

After the accident, Gene looked for intentional ways to care for the senior leaders so they could care for their teams, and this trickled down so that everyone on campus had strong support systems in place. Counselors were available and the community was encouraged to seek help in specific ways.

### **Taylor University as an Institution**

The second theme that emerged from the research gave greater insight to Taylor University as an institution.

### ***Unique Campus Culture***

Nine out of 11 participants shared about how Taylor University had, and still embodies, a unique campus culture. Like many universities, Taylor has always been a special place to many students and alumni over the years. Taylor has stayed faithful to its mission, has continued to value whole-person development, and has made impressive academic strides across many fields of study. Taylor values tradition and innovation in student development. Taylor has also weathered many difficult seasons over the years, each of which have had a marked impact on the campus. Participant 5, a senior level leader, said,

David Gyertson, who was the president before Gene, um, the first person I went through crises with. You know? His view of Taylor, and I love this imagery. That Taylor is at its best when things are at the worst. And, you know, I saw that, that happen this way. You know, I mean... I- I- (laughs). I can remember, you know, because... It was pretty well known that I was one of the inner circle of, in dealing

with this. I had people on campus that I'd never spoken to checking on me. I had people from the Parents' Council offering to send [my wife and I] away on weekend retreats to recuperate, you know, those- those kind of things. But, you know, the- the- the incredible importance of who the Taylor community is, uh, was- was just magnified through this in- in ways that it's kind of hard to describe... I think we shouldn't be surprised when really, really big things change us. And both personally, but also as a campus community, I think. And very recognizable both before and after.

It is clear that Dr. Habecker was able to build upon the legacy of others, especially considering the timing of the van accident occurring during the first year of his presidency. At the same time, Dr. Habecker stayed true to his own personality and style of leadership in his crisis response.

Faculty deeply care for students and want to see them succeed both in and out of the classroom. With deep relationships also comes deep grief when there is loss. Administrators and faculty at Taylor had to find ways to lead while experiencing their own grief. Extensions were given to students on assignments and policies were bent to ensure students were cared for first as people before their grades were prioritized. Faculty wanted to do their part to help students grieve, and accommodating individual needs was one way they could prioritize students while keeping the integrity of the curriculum.

The depth of investment from faculty also helped inform care for students following the accident. Senior level leaders and the student development department formed what they called "concentric circles" to help identify the needs of students. They started thinking of siblings, roommates, and close friends of the victims of the accident

and prioritized their needs. Then they thought about the next level of care—friends from the hall, classmates who were in the same major, those who played sports together. What were those students' needs and how could Taylor meet them? This process continued so students could be intentionally cared for on a broad level. The key in this structured response is that those relationships and that depth of care for students had been present long before the accident. Care for students was part of Taylor's DNA and was paramount in carrying the campus through such a tragedy. Participant 3, a senior level leader, recalls,

We had strong leadership teams, we had strong, by that I mean, experienced, capable, um, camaraderie, um, collaborative, um, we worked well together. And that is another, I think, pre- I will say, you know, almost a prerequisite that existed. Um, we had worked together well and we worked together as a collaborative team. And Dr. Habecker, fostered that, when he came. So he just built upon that which was, um, already, um, present. Um, the other thing that we had was a deep, caring, community of scholarship and faith. And you know all that goes into that, the collaborative work of student development and academic affairs so that there was no, um, tension between administrative units or functions, that it was a seamless collaboration. Um, the other thing, I think, that, that was part of this besides the experienced administrators, and, and leaders, um, we knew the institutional policies.

The van accident occurred in an era during which there was marked longevity of Taylor faculty who understood and shared a common ethos, reflecting a commitment to Taylor University and its mission.

*Preparedness: Effective, Not Perfect*

The other subtheme that emerged to describe Taylor as an institution was in their preparedness. Six out of 11 participants recalled the ways Taylor was prepared for many types of crises. While no one would have ever envisioned so tragic an accident, there were steps in place in advance should the leadership team ever be faced with situations involving student or staff death. It's important to note that the leadership was effective, but definitely not perfect. Leaders at Taylor were working with the information they had in the moment. Sometimes, quick decisions needed to be made and there may not have been a clear path forward. Additionally, a crisis response plan was used. Once being informed of the accident, senior level administrators gathered at a specific space that they all knew of in advance, in case a crisis ever occurred. They opened up a binder which had detailed information of steps to take. Having this in place helped inform practice, especially in those initial hours of shock. Participant 5, a senior level leader, remembers,

Through- throughout this whole time, uh, we- we had pretty- pretty well-written procedures that we were following. You know, communicating with media, communicating with law enforcement, communicating with... So the crisis plan got implemented, uh, and we all got pretty close. It was kind of the- the first day... It- it was, it was a little bit of a collective. When- when I first got here to the Campus Police Office, I met the Camp- the Chief of Police, and I said, "Get the crisis plan." It was back in the, uh, days where you had folders and stuff. We actually had a printed plan and we looked it up. You know, there were 30 or 40 scenarios in there. We found a scenario that- that matched, and- and started, you know, starting making those calls and appointing those kind of things... And by

the protocol, we were the ones, were kind of the designated initial point people to begin with. We were the ones that implemented it. Then, you know, these other vice presidents and other people. Uh, our media relations guy came. You know? So we pretty much followed it. And it started as a quick decision and then was really kind of a, kind of a group implementation with the appropriate people moving forward. I can still remember thinking... This is really bizarre. I'm opening a notebook, and it was actually phenomenally helpful to have something tangible to- to look at, to feel, to kind of guide you and get you started. And, you know, we did not... We strayed. You know, and every situation, I think, is going to provide those opportunities where the, where the policy's pretty good but it may not cover everything. You know? So we- we adapted on the fly. But the preparation, you know, was huge.

There was documented preparation to guide dealing with crises of various types. The experiences subsequently led to further documentary development and even to the creation of a university police department.

### **Faith as Foundational**

Lastly, 11 out of 11 participants shared about the role that faith played in both how Gene and Marylou led as well as in Taylor as an institution. The power of prayer was evident even on the night of the accident. Upon hearing of the accident and the subsequent mistaken identity, people around the world prayed for the Taylor community and families who had lost their children. The Taylor community came together in profound ways to encourage one another. Even with persons from different Christian traditions and experiences comprising the institution, there is no doubt that a strong sense



of spiritual leadership from Dr. Habecker helped the Taylor community, and even the administrators themselves, make meaning of this situation. In turn, that faith foundation helped leaders make future decisions to guide the campus through the grief process. One way they did this was through the building of the Memorial Prayer Chapel, a designated space on campus to remember God's faithfulness through the accident and through the loss of many other students, faculty, and staff members from the Taylor community over the years. Dr. Habecker, through tears, recalled,

And I- I- I said something to the effect in- in response to that question. "You know, won't this be a downer, you know, for the graduates of this class?" And I said, "Oh, to the contrary. They're gonna remember this as a time and a... And a place where God showed up big time. In ways that we can never imagine..." If you talk to the- to the students who- who were at Taylor at that time and who went through it, yeah, we- we all were pained by the loss. But boy, we saw a picture of God at work in in our lives, and, uh, dealing with the tough issues of life in transformative, incredibly life altering, in life altering ways, and I- I think people ended up with a much stronger walk with the Lord. A much more vibrant relationship with the Lord because of all of it. Because what we all learned together. That- that's, you know, the whole life together, life together. That was it. It was life together in the midst of chaos. God shows up big time. And you can count- count on it. Even in the hard times.

At an institution like Taylor, having faith be integral to the crisis response was natural, even necessary. The leaders involved reflected on the value of their personal faith and its impact on how they made meaning of the situation. Faith is an important part of the grief

process, so including it in the institutional wide response was meaningful and left a long-term impact.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

*“I think [students] know from our leadership that we didn’t just see them as students. We saw them as the future executives and senators and Congress people and business leaders and fill in the gap. And the accident reinforced all of that ten times... it reinforced that the student needs to be the primary focus... What are we going to do to optimize the experience so that students can become the men and women that God really desires them to be?”*

Dr. Eugene B. Habecker

As discussed in the literature review, a leader’s response to crisis can have the power to propel an organization forward or can be deeply detrimental to individuals and an organization. There is no perfect response; each situation should be approached specifically. At the same time, there is much wisdom in learning from those who have gone before and have had experiences that shaped them personally, their communities, and their institutions. While there is no way to prepare for each situation, a higher education administrator may encounter during his or her tenure, there is value in being forward-thinking and staying relevant to current needs. The following pages discuss this study’s findings and how they can inform practice for higher education administrators facing crisis situations. Connecting the themes that arose during this study to present-day circumstances will deepen a leader’s understanding of select best practices and potential approaches to responding to crisis events of all kinds.

### Methodology and Themes

This study was approached through a phenomenological case study methodology. The case entails the leadership practices of Dr. Eugene B. Habecker, President of Taylor

University from 2005 to 2016, as he led the institution through unimaginable loss after four students and one staff member were tragically killed in an accident. Five weeks later, it was discovered that there had been a mistaken identity at the scene of the accident. Research entailed interviews with thirteen participants, two being Gene and Marylou Habecker, the president and first lady at the time of the event. Following the interviews, themes arose surrounding the leadership style and structure, the identity of Taylor University as an institution, and the faith formation that took place as a result of the accident and subsequent mistaken identity.

While no leader could have addressed this situation flawlessly, the research reveals the effective ways Gene and Marylou, as partners in the presidency, deeply impacted an entire campus community. Participants spoke of the Habeckers' deep care and love for students, of their intentionality and willingness to be action-oriented, and of the ways in which they leaned on their team and invited other voices to help carry the load of the decision making and crisis response. Themes also arose surrounding Taylor University's distinct culture and its preparation for a variety of crisis situations, though the accident and mistaken identity were far beyond what anyone could have imagined. Lastly, the role that faith played both in how the Habeckers led and how the university responded was key to understanding the ways the crisis response played out over the weeks following the accident.

### **Implications for Practice**

When considering the ways this research may inform practice, it is imperative to remember that this study is not a prescriptive response for all other crises. The intention is to provide educational leaders with takeaways from this leadership example that can be

used to guide decision-making during crisis situations, whether or not these involve the loss of life. Hopefully, some of these themes can serve as best practices to help leaders consider ways they can prepare for crisis situations now and how their actions may play out in future situations.

A note before the discussion continues: Higher education administrators should liberate themselves from the notion that things must be perfect. No one, no matter how seasoned a leader or how prepared for crisis, will ever be able to do things perfectly. This case is an example of how there will always be aspects of a situation that elude preparation. At the same time, learning from those who have experienced crisis situations affords great value and wisdom. Their actions can inform and guide future decision-making in response to higher education crises.

***Preparedness: Effective, Not Perfect***

Crisis situations are inevitable. Institutions around the world experience emergency situations daily, and no university is exempt from a crisis on its campus. A key takeaway from this research is the power of being prepared. Keeping in mind the unique timing of the accident, the week of Dr. Habecker's inauguration as President of Taylor University, one can understand the degree of attention given to the events the campus community was anticipating over the next few days. No one planned for a tragedy such as the accident, not to mention the mistaken identity that followed. Despite the deep grief and shock that the whole campus was experiencing, the leadership team was quick to take action.

Participants reflected upon the ways in which the Taylor University faculty and staff came together. After looking at the crisis response plan with a few key senior level

leaders, responsibilities were quickly delegated, and staff dispersed to carry out their duties. While Taylor had experienced student deaths in the past, no situation had ever risen to this magnitude. Having a crisis response plan to follow during the initial hours after the accident proved particularly beneficial. While the response planning changed as more information was communicated, having a guide to get started helped leaders make quick decisions amidst their grief, shock, and confusion.

Having so many key leaders involved also helped distribute the load to be more effective and efficient, especially with the constant flow of information. The team-based approach to decision-making that Dr. Habecker had been building during his first year as president contributed to the successful crisis response. It allowed people with a variety of experiences in higher education to contribute in distinctive ways. Some had dealt with law enforcement more often, some had experience calling parents and having to share tragic news, some knew specific students and could help care for siblings who were also studying at Taylor, and some prepared to receive the news outlets and reporters that quickly arrived at Taylor's campus. Being prepared was vital, but more than that, being unified as a team and willing to serve based on one's specific experiences proved to be crucial to this crisis response.

### ***The Power of Presence***

Considering the amount of phone calls and attention this event received, it would be common for a university president to stay out of the spotlight and away from students in order to take care of business. Gene and Marylou did the opposite. Following the news of the accident and the delegation of roles, Gene and Marylou came alongside students in their grief. They spent hours on the floor of Rediger Chapel praying and weeping with

their campus community. Their presence and vulnerability modeled for students, faculty, and staff what it looked like to grieve during such a tragic situation. They exemplified what it looks like to lean on one another during times of crisis, and more importantly, to cry out to God in grief and trauma. In Gene's words, "we all were holding up each other, you know, in this process." They were available and willing to lead through their grief. Given the magnitude of the van accident, this was not something that this president and first lady were going to delegate to someone else; they needed to be there and be fully engaged.

In reflecting about the night of the accident, many participants could not recall the specific role that Gene and Marylou played outside of leading the campus through the grief. There were no significant recollections of Gene and Marylou being in the public eye talking with reporters or recollections of Gene and Marylou being in an office to speak with law enforcement that evening. The memories that flooded participants were of Gene and Marylou in the front row of the chapel, weeping and praying alongside the student body, having a genuine and authentic manifestation of their shock and grief.

Participants spoke of how Gene stood on stage to address the community, and with quivering voice and through tears, shared all the information he had. There was power in Gene and Marylou's presence which communicated the value in gathering together. Gathering was already common for the Taylor community, as chapel services were held in Rediger Chapel three times per week. It was natural for people to come together in their worship, in their grief, and in their questioning. Having Gene and Marylou there during that time solidified for the grieving community that the leaders of

the institution were also humans, and it was the start of an incredibly bonding experience for that group of people.

### *Partnership in the Presidency*

It is rare to see a university president display so publicly a partnership with his or her spouse. While the spouse of the president must be loyal to the institution's mission, the demands of the job make it challenging for both spouses to be involved the way Gene and Marylou were. Marylou's leadership on Taylor's campus leaves a legacy that will last for years to come. Students remember being invited into their home for cookies or going roller-skating around Taylor's "Loop" alongside Marylou. She could be seen on campus just as often, if not more than, Gene, though she didn't have an official role outside of being First Lady. It was common for Gene and Marylou to speak together in Taylor's chapel, as they continue to do on occasion. The partnership between Gene and Marylou demonstrated the value of a husband and wife working together for the sake of persons and the institution. Their partnership communicated unity and commitment to one another and to their work. It was on display for all of Taylor to see and, given their pronounced Christian faith, demonstrated a powerful example of a Christ-centered relationship.

The strengths that both Gene and Marylou brought into their partnership also showed the value of different skill sets in leadership. Gene writes extensively about the importance of soft skills and having them as part of one's leadership approach in a crisis situation proved to be incredibly impactful. Gene gives credit to Marylou for teaching him the importance of soft skills throughout their marriage, something that he continues to carry with him and develop as he leads and consults. Gene is remembered as a deeply



humble and pastoral president. He is a strong communicator, values a healthy, hardworking team, is analytical, and has a legal background. Collectively these factors contributed to an effective presidency, but it was Marylou by his side who helped him connect with people. Participant 4, a faculty member, reflected on her saying, “No one could ever be in Marylou’s presence without knowing that she really, genuinely cared about them and, you know, loved them, and wanted them to succeed.”

The striking example of Gene and Marylou’s partnership in the presidency will seldom be replicated. They were in a specific season of life, at a specific institution with specific needs that allowed them to serve in a very special way. The takeaways for other university presidents to consider is the value of having a spouse who is also bought in to the mission and vision of the institution. Even when not in an official role for the institution, president’s spouses have influence. Knowing that both Gene and Marylou were available in a genuine way communicated to students that their president and first lady supported their learning, growth, and development. It promoted a familial environment and relationships. Consequently, in this crisis, students trusted their leaders and had a safe space to grieve and process in company with Gene and Marylou.

### ***Knowing Students Deeply***

Gene and Marylou’s partnership also contributed to their ability to know students deeply. They set a tone and expectation for Taylor faculty and staff to also be invested in the lives of students, a piece of the Taylor culture that had been prevalent and valued for many years prior and continues to be. Gene and Marylou, though they were only in the first year of the presidency at Taylor, had already established deep relationships with students, knowing many by name. Because this kind of culture had existed previously,

students knew they had strong mentors on campus who would help them through their grief. Student development staff were able to recall students by name and knew where they lived and who close friends were.

As soon as the names of the victims were released, student development faculty and administrators went directly to the first layer of hurting students. Hall directors could move to a specific area of Rediger Chapel, where different floors of students would traditionally sit, and come alongside students in an earnest and intentional way. Those relationships were so deeply engrained in the Taylor culture that it made sharing the grief process more natural and more bearable. As they days and weeks continued, there was space for meaningful connection and conversations about how people were doing and there was freedom to answer truthfully because those relationships were already there. The experience of shared grief was deeply bonding. Administrators in higher education institutions should take the approach of being student-focused. Not only is it a powerful way to connect with students, it also proves to be invaluable when faced with unspeakable grief as a campus community.

### ***Mental Health***

Coming alongside students through the difficult seasons of life is a vital part of being a higher education educator. With the widespread mental health crisis that college students are experiencing, it is imperative that institutions be prepared to respond should a crisis occur. This research shows the value of being team-oriented and the necessity for clear communication. During a crisis situation, students need to see administrators and educators unified and informed in their response. There is little room for questioning and

second guessing, as crisis response often requires decisions to be made quickly, especially in life-or-death circumstances.

As the mental health needs escalate on campuses across the country, having adequate staffing in counseling centers is imperative, not only for students, but for faculty and staff as well. A crisis of any magnitude will have an impact on campuses. Four students and one staff member died in the Taylor van accident. While their influence and loss were deeply felt by many in a personal way, there was a large population of people at Taylor that did not have a personal relationship with the victims. Still, the larger population felt the grief and loss in a personal way. Administrators need to be prepared to respond to a crisis on many levels. A sibling who is grieving, a professor who has lost a student, a significant other with plans for the future, a loyal roommate or faithful friend, a classmate, or even an acquaintance—all of these people experience the loss and the impact of tragedy in an individual way. Grief will extend beyond the academic term, through the seasons, or even years later. Administrators who respond with intentionality and a genuine spirit, even long after the initial shock, will be held in high regard. Relationships go a long way, but resources to fund the practical needs in a crisis response are also vital.

### ***External Relationships***

In considering relationships and resources, Taylor's approach to handling the van accident crisis relied extensively on those from the outside. Dr. Habecker personally reached out to parents and families of the victims. Following the night of the accident, he also served as one of the spokesmen for the media and news outlets, though the majority of that responsibility was eventually delegated to a communications officer. From a

public relations standpoint, Taylor was put in a vulnerable position. Immediately following news of the mistaken identity, Dr. Habecker hired a well-respected law firm in Indianapolis to assist in the legal aspects of the crisis management. He was intentional to share the facts but worked to dispel any allegation of Taylor's responsibility in the accident or mistaken identity. Though it was clear that the coroner made a mistake at the scene, Gene worked to mitigate any blame being cast on the institution or individuals involved.

Furthermore, the senior level leaders had to consider many aspects of the crisis response in addition to student care including matters such as retention, insurance, and liability. The participant interviews made clear that it was a team effort to come up with solutions for each of these "behind the scenes" areas. Gene trusted his team and placed much of the responsibility on individuals in order to help Taylor come up with the best plans for whatever arose. Relationships with external constituents also matter. For example, because the students and staff members involved in the accident were in a Taylor vehicle traveling from a Taylor event, various legal concerns and responses ensued. Thorough investigations take time and there must be measured timing of communications to ensure accuracy.

Administrators are often working with limited information, but still carry the responsibility of making a decision. Crisis leadership requires the ability to compartmentalize and carry on relationships both internally and externally. At the time, Taylor had a long-standing history with their insurance company and those relationships were beneficial when having to make the tough decisions. Indiana Wesleyan University, a competitor school in some ways, stepped up in many ways, as did other neighboring

institutions. Other schools belonging to the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities sent staff to serve in the dining commons, since that team had been deeply impacted by the accident. Many people sent encouraging messages to Dr. Habecker and other leaders, committing to pray for God's peace. Vendors and external relationships matter to an institution experiencing a crisis, so administrators should choose those wisely.

### **Implications for Future Research**

For future research, one could compare the van accident and the mistaken identity to a similar situation at another school which has faced the sudden loss of students or staff. What parts of the approach were similar or different? Another researcher could study the differences in crises response based on institution types, such as a large public university or a non-faith-based institution. Focus groups with faculty and students, in addition to individual interviews, could be of benefit for future research. Conducting focus groups would help understand the essence of a shared experience among a specific group, such as students who lived on the same floor as one of the accident victims, or faculty who teach in a department together.

### **Limitations**

There were a few limitations for this project. The researcher came into this project with expectations of interviewing a male and a female from each category (students, faculty, board of trustees, etc.). Unfortunately, women in leadership are less common at Taylor, especially at the time of the accident. The researcher would have preferred to have more equal representation among genders. Additionally, a larger pool of participants could have helped solidify the results. The researcher had to limit the number of

participants in order to keep the scope of the project reasonable within the required time frame.

Furthermore, some of the data were collected through virtual interviews instead of in-person. This could contribute to inconsistency in the interpretation of body language or facial expressions when analyzing the results and seeking to understand the essence of the experience. Lastly, the researcher was not part of the Taylor community in 2006, so she does not have a personal experience with this event. Even so, she has been deeply touched and challenged because of her research, time in the University Archives, and time with individuals who were closely impacted by this event. Researcher bias could be present because of the personal connections made during the research process and because of the nature of the case studied. The accident and its aftermath were life-altering experiences that continue to influence Taylor University and the people who were involved.

## **Conclusion**

This study sought to understand the experiences of a university president and the surrounding community after experiencing a campus crisis. Encountering crises is inevitable when working with people and while higher education institutions tend to operate in systems, particular circumstances call for contextually measured responses.

Using the 2006 van accident at Taylor University as a case study, the researcher interviewed thirteen people who were directly involved as administrators, senior level leaders, student development faculty, academic faculty, staff, students, or members of the board of trustees. The findings of this study describe aspects of the crisis management that worked well for Taylor University at that particular time. The results reveal specific

leadership qualities of Dr. Eugene and Mrs. Marylou Habecker, the president and first lady at the time of the accident. Themes relating to their personalities, their actions, and how they involved other people were the most prevalent. Additionally, the findings show how Taylor University, a campus culture highly focused upon students, faculty, and staff contributed to the distinctive crisis response, including being well prepared. Furthermore, the role that Christian faith played in how the institution and individuals experienced this crisis is integral to understanding the motives behind decisions that were made and how their impact was felt.

While it is difficult to predict the full range of benefits, this study provides insight into an event that has been shared many times, but now from a focused, particular perspective. The researcher sought to provide a fuller, 360-degree view of what transpired after the van accident, as well as to dive deeper into Dr. Habecker's leadership through the crisis. Furthermore, the study provides principles for other administrative leaders who experience crises in their institutions. Though this research reports on policy and practice in crisis leadership during a specific case, derived principles may be transferable to a variety of crises that face other colleges and universities.

This research provides context to crisis management, offering results that can help inform how institutions respond to a variety of crises, including the Covid-19 pandemic, student and staff deaths, liability issues involving institutional property, care for leaders in higher education, and the mental health crisis that many colleges are wrestling with today. Overall, this study contributes to the body of resources upon which higher education leaders can draw in order to respond to institutional crises in contextual, informed, and effective ways. By identifying key components of Taylor University's

response to a tragic accident, this study reveals best practices and leadership traits to embody that will serve higher education institutions in their crisis response for years to come.



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## Appendix A

### Starting Questions for Semi Structured Interviews

#### Potential Questions for Gene and Marylou Habecker:

1. What did you do to maintain your own wellbeing: emotionally, spiritually and physically during the crisis? What assisted you in moving beyond your own emotions?
2. How did you maintain work-life balance during this crisis?
3. How did the unique timing of the van accident (your Inauguration) impact your response?
4. What did you do differently as President of Taylor as a result of the accident? Did your goals as President change as a result of this experience?
5. How did you “stay the course” and keep the university moving forward?
6. How did you maintain focus on other important issues?
7. What past experiences helped prepare you for leading through this crisis and how?
8. How did this crisis impact your concept of leadership?
9. What was it like being the “face” or main spokesperson for the university?
10. How were you able to show concern and care for your leadership team and how were they able to show concern for you?
11. Who were you able to rely on for assistance and how did they provide this? Who did you surround yourself with?
12. What did it look like to care for the Taylor community as a whole? How did you and your team care for students?
13. How did you navigate the publicity of this event and the world’s opinions of what happened?
14. What did care for families of victims look like?
15. What was effective? Ineffective?
16. What role did personal reflection play and when and how often did you engage in it?
17. How did you process the elements that were beyond your control as a leader to manage?
18. How did you personally make meaning of the crisis? How did you lead others in making meaning of the crisis?
19. What were the most critical aspects of the early response to the news and how did this change?
20. What was it like to walk along Dr. Habecker through this experience? What unique perspective can you bring as a First Lady that may be helpful to others in similar roles?
21. How important was it to project calm and how were you able to do this?

22. There is a quote I have heard many times from your Inauguration: “*Effective leaders have to do multiple things well... in crisis situations, three things must be done exceptionally well: absorb chaos, give calm, and provide hope*”. How did the van accident and following mistaken identity shape your leadership during crisis as it relates to absorbing chaos, giving calm, and providing hope? How do you continue to live this out today?
23. What has God taught you as a result of this experience?

**Potential Questions for Students, Faculty, Staff, Board of Trustees, etc.**

1. Walk me through the night of the accident and specific examples of leadership that stand out to you as a result.
2. How has your view of leadership been shaped by Dr. Habecker’s example during the van accident and subsequent mistaken identity?
3. How did you make meaning out of the situation in your specific setting (student, faculty, staff, etc.)
4. How have you made meaning out of the situation now 15 years later?
5. How has your own leadership been shaped by your reflection?
6. What did the senior leadership team at Taylor do that made you feel cared for after the crisis?
7. How have you commemorated/ remembered this event and it’s impact in your personal life?
8. What has God taught you as a result of this experience?

## **Appendix B**

### **The Use of Archival Data**

The researcher utilized archival data to initially understand and analyze the case being studied before conducting interviews. Time spent in the University Archives reviewing personal documents, newspaper articles, chapel messages, email correspondence, magazines, and photos helped the researcher view this case through a historical overview. It also shed light on characteristics of the main leaders involved. University Archives resources aided in the formation of the interview protocol and provided the researcher context for specific events that arose in participants' answers during interviews. While information gleaned from the University Archives informed historical context for this research no content was directly quoted or utilized.

## **Appendix C**

### **Informed Consent**

#### **RESEARCH INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT**

##### **Administrative Leadership through Crisis: The Experience of Taylor University Community Members Following the Van Accident on April 26, 2006**

You are invited to participate in a research study on higher education administrative leadership during crisis. This study will specifically focus on the leadership of Dr. Eugene Habecker and his response to the van accident and the mistaken identity that followed. You were selected as a potential participant in this study because of your experience as a member of the Taylor University community in April of 2006. This consent form is required to give information about the study, to convey that participation is entirely voluntary, to explain the risks and benefits of participating in the study, and to empower you to make an informed decision based on the information given. Please feel free to ask any questions you may have at any point of the study. You must sign and complete the form before any interviews and focus groups will take place.

This study is being conducted by Eryn Marburger as part of completing the requirements for the Master of Arts in Higher Education program at Taylor University.

#### **PURPOSE OF RESEARCH**

- The purpose of this research is to take a closer look at the leadership of Dr. Eugene Habecker during his ten-year presidency at Taylor University. It will tell the un-told stories of those who were under Dr. Habecker's care, specifically during and after the van accident crisis in 2006.
- Through the research process, the researcher hopes to bring to light the qualities and characteristics that made Dr. Habecker successful, specifically while leading the Taylor community through the tragic events of April 26, 2006 and the mistaken identity that followed.
- The researcher wants to understand how the students, faculty, staff, board of trustees, and outside community experienced Dr. Habecker's leadership.
- The researcher hopes to draw conclusions and provide principles on which leaders who find themselves in future crises can learn from. This research will inform policy and future practice on how administrators in higher education can respond to unexpected crises.

- You are being invited to participate in this study because you were, in some way, involved or impacted by the van accident and have experience under Dr. Habecker's leadership and care.

## RESEARCH PROCEDURES

- Participants who agree to be part of this study will review this document and sign the consent form at the bottom before interviews of any kind will take place.
- The subjects in this study will participate through approximately one-hour interviews or focus group sessions. The interviews and focus groups will take place in November or December, 2021. Should the researcher need further information from you in the form of an additional interview or extended interview, she will request that individually.
- The researcher will utilize interview protocol, but the semi-structured interviews will provide space and flexibility for the interviewer to ask follow up questions to better understand the topic being addressed.
- Please answer all questions honestly and with as much detail as possible.
- All answers will be kept confidential as well as the identity of the participants
  - Note: Due to the specific nature of this topic and the world-wide publicity the van accident received, some senior level leaders' anonymity may be unable to be guarded. The identities of other groups who are participating, such as students and faculty, will be kept anonymous unless participants choose to share that information.
- This research will be used for educational purposes.
- All findings will be presented, reviewed, and approved by participants.

## POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

- While it is difficult to predict the full range of benefits, this study will hopefully provide insight to an event that has been told many times, but now from a unique perspective. The researcher desires to provide a fuller, 360-degree view of what happened after the van accident at Taylor University, as well as dive deeper into Dr. Habecker's leadership through the crisis.
- The study will hopefully provide principles for other administrative leaders who experience crisis in their institutions.
- This research will inform policy and future practice, specifically for leaders in higher education.
- The researcher hopes to honor the stories and legacies of those who have been touched by the van accident. Even in recalling a difficult time, the researcher hopes this time of reflection provides participants an opportunity to remember and celebrate what God has done through and because of this significant event.

## POTENTIAL RISKS OF PARTICIPATION & RESOURCES

- There is no doubt the van accident and the events that followed is a heavy subject that had a deep impact on many people, especially those who may participate in this study. Foreseeable risks to the participants include recalling potentially

traumatic thoughts, feelings, and experiences associated with the 2006 van accident at Taylor University and the mistaken identity that followed.

- Participants may decline to answer any question at any point if the risk of distress is deemed too great by the participant. Participants may stop at any time or take breaks during the interviews and focus group sessions.
- If a participant chooses to pursue therapy as a result of this project, counseling resources are available at PsychologyToday.com. The researcher and/or Taylor University is not held responsible for covering costs of therapy as a result of participating in this study.
- Because of the nature of this study, the Taylor University Counseling Center Director, Kathy Chamberlain, has been informed of the topic.

#### PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- Data collected during this study will protect the identities of participants by using a code name. Code names on all materials will be consistently used throughout the study
  - As noted above, some identities may not be able to be protected due to the specific nature of the topic. Participants will be informed of whether or not a code name will be used to identify them throughout the study.
- The researcher has a responsibility to release information should a participant show a potential harm for him or herself or to others during this study
- Interviews conducted virtually will be recorded on the researcher's personal, password-protected computer. Interviews conducted in-person will be recorded on the researcher's personal, password-protected cell phone. The researcher will take notes throughout the interview. Upon completion of the research, all recordings, transcriptions, and notes will be destroyed. Any notes or devices used will always be stored in a locked office or home belonging to the researcher.
- The following will have access to the data:
  - Researchers, transcriber, and the researcher's supervisor
  - Institutional Review Board (IRB)
- The results of this study may be published and presented in a professional setting, but the identities of all research participants will kept confidential unless otherwise noted.
- The researcher may choose to terminate a subject's participation in this study without regard to the subject's consent.

#### YOUR RIGHTS AS A PARTICIPANT

- Each participant has a right to withdraw from being part of this study at any time. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and is not required in any way.
- Should you choose to withdraw, none of the information you have shared as part of the study will be used in the results. Data specific to you will be destroyed.
- The interviews and focus groups will occur in private spaces. Participants are welcome and encouraged to take breaks during interviews if needed.
- Participants will complete an informed consent form prior to beginning an interview or focus group session. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher will review the consent form and inform each participant of their right to withdraw from the study at any time.



#### COSTS AND COMPENSATION

- You will not receive money or compensation in any way as a result of participating in this study

#### WAIVER OF ANONYMITY OPTION

- Because of the nature of this topic, by participating in this study, you are being given the option to choose whether or not you would like to remain anonymous. Please check the box below (near the signature section) if you would like to remain anonymous or not.

#### CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

**Researcher:**

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**Faculty Advisor:**

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765-998-5379

Should participants have any questions about the nature of this study, your rights as a participant, or any other aspect of this research as it relates to participating, please contact Taylor University's Institutional Review Board at [IRB@taylor.edu](mailto:IRB@taylor.edu) or the interim IRB Chair, Edwin Welch, at 756-998-4315 or [edwelch@taylor.edu](mailto:edwelch@taylor.edu)

#### PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose to stop participating at any point. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with Taylor University.

In consideration of all of the above, I give my consent to participate in this research study. I waive any legal rights by signing this form. By signing this form, I confirm that I am 18 years of age or older. I will be given a copy of this informed consent document to keep for my records. I agree to take part in this study.

#### WAIVER OF ANONYMITY

I would like to remain anonymous

By not checking the box above, I understand my name and position may be used in the writing and presentation of the data.

Participant's Printed Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Printed  
Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

