

# Archived Information

**STATEMENT OF CAROL YOUNG, PH.D.  
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BEFORE THE SECRETARY'S COMMISSION ON THE  
FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, FEBRUARY 3, 2006**

Hello. My name is Carol Young. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Commission on the Future of Higher Education. I am honored to join the other panel members as they describe their experiences in innovative, non-traditional approaches to higher education and the learning process for adults.

I am a recent graduate of Capella University, where I earned a Ph.D. in Organization and Management with a specialization in Leadership. My educational path has been a long one, fueled by a desire for knowledge and the aspiration for continual growth. I started first grade at the age of 4 in a very small rural elementary school in Kansas that did not even have an inside restroom. I made the eighth student and that allowed the school to remain open for one more year. I continued in the Kansas public school system until I graduated from high school. I then attended a Catholic Nursing School in Wichita, but left there and started a professional diploma nursing program in Houston. I did not work during that time. I graduated and passed my licensing exam to become a Registered Nurse.

I worked as an RN for several years, during which time my daughter and son were born. As they approached school age, I felt the desire to return to school and I believed that a bachelor's degree was essential to future success as a nurse. I earned a Bachelors of Science in Nursing at Houston Baptist University. About five years later, I again felt the desire to learn and the need for more education to enhance my career, but along a different line. Working full time,

having a family, and trying to meet school class schedules, it took me six and one-half years in a traditional program at the University of Houston, but I did earn an M.B.A. That degree opened many doors for me, including the opportunity for a Nurse Executive Fellowship and promotions at work. My current job requires a Masters degree.

Eight years after earning my M.B.A., I made the decision to begin a Ph.D. program. That quest took nearly four years, but I treasure the experience and I feel fulfilled. Just think – a little girl from a farm in Kansas is now Dr. Young. What a thrill.

I chose an innovative, non-traditional school because it was the only way I could continue with my chosen career in a company where I had worked for nearly 30 years. As I searched for a school that would best fit me, I discovered Capella University. It was fully accredited and was small enough that I felt that I would receive personal attention, and I did. I received an email just a couple of months ago from my admissions advisor, just saying hello. Learner support services have met every need and answered or found the answer to my questions in a prompt, helpful, and professional manner.

Most of all, the faculty were wonderful and treated us as peers. There were not more than 16 learners in my courses, which allowed us to get to know each other in addition to the instructor well. We had access to faculty in the course room, via email, and by telephone. We also met many faculty members and other learners at the colloquia. The colloquia were an innovative idea that provided an excellent opportunity for more in-depth interaction with faculty, administrators, support services, and learners from our own school along with learners from the other schools at Capella University. The quality of my instructors was excellent. For example, my dissertation committee was made up of my mentor, who has a D.B.A., a member who is an M.D. as well as Ph.D., a psychologist with a Psy.D. and law degree, and a visiting scholar from

L.S.U who has a Ph.D. Additionally, most of my faculty had held or were holding positions of responsibility in the business world. That added a richness and depth to my education. They could speak to the latest research on a topic and enrich it with experiences they had encountered in their career. I am currently working as a peer with my mentor on two different but related academic projects.

Each step of my college career has opened more doors for employment and career advancement that I never even dreamed of as a young nurse starting out. I spoke to the Chief Nurse Executive where I work about a month after I graduated to tell her I was finished and she offered an exciting job on the spot. My hospital is beginning the journey toward Magnet Recognition, a program developed by the American Nurses Association that recognizes the unique contribution of Registered Nurses to the healthcare of hospitalized Americans. She offered me the opportunity to coordinate that journey and to use my Ph.D. to direct the nursing research program that will assist us in providing evidence-based practice to improve patient outcomes. I do not think that opportunity would have been offered to me without the successful completion of my PhD at Capella. I am now filling that role along with my previous position as RN IV in Low Risk Newborn Nursery. I have the best of both worlds.

Along with that opportunity, I can now serve as a faculty member to help other learners along the path to fulfill their dreams. I am now starting to investigate other innovative educational programs where I can work in the same manner that was so successful for me as a learner. One where I can work at the time most convenient to me and one where I can do my work from anywhere in the world so I can continue to travel for pleasure. Along with the knowledge I have to share, all I would need is internet access.

I did receive financial aid for the first time while I was at Capella University. An advisor helped me get started and it was easy after that. Everything I needed to apply for and to keep track of my loans was easily available on the Capella website. Even though I am still in the grace period, I have started to pay back the loan. The debt is very manageable and I am planning to pay it off in one-half or less of the required time. Compared to the costs of a doctoral program in a traditional university, my education at Capella University was not only more convenient, but affordable. I was able to continue full-time employment throughout my program and that would not have been not possible in the traditional program I investigated. I also did not pay the many fees that were required when I earned my other degrees, such as those for the sports programs where I had no interest. My time is valuable also and I got to spend my available time on continuing my career and on learning rather than driving to class and looking for a parking spot.

#### Recommendations for the Commission

1. Encourage and help finance additional innovative non-traditional models that will increase access for those adults who are unable to attend traditional programs, such as those with full time jobs, burdensome family responsibilities, travel frequently, or live a long distance from campus.
2. Encourage and help finance programs to attract more faculty members with appropriate degrees who work outside academia to join the pool of available instructors. In order to produce graduates who are adequately prepared step into the workplace, there must be an adequate quantity of faculty with impeccable credentials. Non-traditional programs can draw from a pool of professionals who are unable to attend traditional programs for the same reasons adult students can not.