“As it is in Heaven”
On the set of his most recent production, filmmaker and Asbury University School of Communication Arts Professor Josh Overbay points to the importance of remaining curious.

Mission Farm
Ground-breaking project that’s rooted in compassion

High-Def Vision
Teaching teachers from new clinical point of view

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- Tutoring At-Risk Students
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Higher education in the 21st Century is in a constant conversation regarding the relationships between priorities like revenue and expense, quality and access, traditional and non-traditional, face-to-face and virtual, teaching and learning, assessment and accountability, and a host of additional either/or/both/and discussions.

The entire nation is fixated on what high schools are doing to ensure their graduates are “college ready” and what college and universities are doing to ensure their graduates are “career ready.” Given the general state of the economy, family budgets, the “job” market, and the incredible investment parents are being asked to make – these conversations are not inconsequential.

However, in the center of this dialogue, we are reminded that the best education is not only about what a graduate can “do,” but also about what they are to “be.” At Asbury University, we believe that exposure to a broad-based curriculum in the liberal arts and sciences, grounded in a decidedly Wesleyan Christian worldview, is the best foundation for the development of skills like critical thinking, analytical reasoning and effective communication. In addition, we are committed to an education with outcomes that focus on engaging the significant needs of society and understanding our global connectedness and responsibility.

At Asbury University, one of the most important factors in this process is the relationships that are forged between the faculty “senior-scholar” and the student “junior-scholar.” Living and learning together, both in and out of the classroom, the student learns what a scholar “does” in their field, what faith looks like with “skin on,” and along the way, each receives food for the journey of life.

Jon S. Kulaga, Ph.D.
Provost
Asbury University
When it comes to agriculture and reaching other cultures with the love of Jesus, Asbury University Associate Professor of Equine Management Marty Bilderback considers vegetables to be a universal language. Through the Mission Farm Project, an interdisciplinary initiative that grafts agricultural, theological and environmental concepts onto a rootstock of compassion and ministry, Asbury students are learning to speak “vegetable,” as well.

The Mission Farm Project is an approach to agriculture in which students are instructed in methods to grow food sustainably and use that knowledge to initiate relationships and minister to others. The interdisciplinary nature of the project — instructors are drawn from three different departments at Asbury and assisted by other experts connected with the University of Kentucky, Berea College and the U.S. Department of Agriculture — has made “sustainable” a word that describes both the produce and the production.

“The fact that so many disciplines have come together, and that so many different individuals have volunteered, has made this the definition of a sustainable community project,” Bilderback said. “Most students aren’t coming with a lot of background in agriculture, and we don’t always realize our connection to the rest of creation.”
In the classroom, students learn about properties of soils, genetics, taxonomy, basic animal husbandry, germination, cover crops and crop rotations. On the farm, those scientific principles are put directly to work in the garden and on projects to improve the farm’s grounds. In both scenarios, Bilderback’s education in agriculture and veterinary medicine and long experience as a farmer and gardener connect the dots for students.

After nine years as a large-animal vet and nearly 20 as a dairy farmer, Bilderback began teaching first at Hiwassee College in Tennessee and then at Midway College in Kentucky. Within a few months of Bilderback’s arrival at Asbury in 2010, he and like-minded educators in the community began fleshing out what it might look like to approach farming and missions from a hands-on perspective.
Early in Bilderback’s teaching career, a conversation with a student from the Ivory Coast revealed his own passion for equipping students with the tools needed to go anywhere and use agricultural skills to build relationships to further God’s kingdom.

“When we explain in detail something like sowing carrots, the focus is on transferring this knowledge into another culture — not just growing carrots,” he said. “When we fell trees, the goal is not to make lumberjacks out of these students, but to show them how to use materials at hand to grow nutritious food and relate with others.

“The Mission Farm Project is and will continue to evolve into a study of developing a solid relationship between agriculture and missions. This relationship will be developed using gardening, husbandry, construction and ministry skills so people can become more fully aware of themselves, others and the world for which we have a Biblical mandate to be caretakers.”

Marty Bilderback, D.V.M. Born and raised on a farm in East Tennessee, Marty received a B.S. in Agriculture from The University of Tennessee and a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine in 1977 from Auburn University. In the late 1990s until 2006, he was field veterinarian for Concepto Diagnostics helping develop a conception test for mares and cows. Marty’s teaching experience began in 2003 as Head of the Agriculture Department of Hiwassee Junior College, continued as Professor and Division Chair of Equine Studies at Midway College, and currently he is an Associate Professor of Equine Management at Asbury University.
sbury University’s School of Education has embarked on a new model for “teaching teachers,” drawing on the P-12 leadership experiences of its faculty and holding fast to a vision of the type of teacher public-school youth need most.

The revamped program has taken a cue from medical and nursing schools and moved to a clinical-based model in which Asbury students spend significant time in schools before student teaching. Just as a medical student would spend time on different floors of a hospital, learning the specifics of oncology, cardiac care or obstetrics, education majors are integrated into a classroom to learn school organization, methodology, instruction design and assessment. With this preparation, they are equipped to better advance the educational goals of the classroom when the time comes for student teaching.

The motivation for the change flows from both external and internal sources. Nationally, an increasing body of research on the most effective practices for teacher preparation has become available, and there have been significant changes in state and national regulations and accrediting agencies. Internally, Asbury’s School of Education has grown to offer not only a traditional undergraduate degree, but also programs for graduate, online and degree-completion students. In the past four years, the department’s enrollment has increased 74 percent — a welcome increase, but one that raises the stakes for ensuring Asbury’s programs are effective.

“It’s not about us as faculty,” said Dr. Verna Lowe, Dean of the School of Graduate and Professional Studies, and, until June 2012, Dean of the School of Education. “We also tell Asbury’s students that it’s not about them, either — it’s about the children, the P-12 children who need to
learn. We’re always asking the question, ‘Will that help us make a better teacher? Is that the best for P-12 children?’

The clinical model did not originate at Asbury, but it is the first completely renovated clinical program in Kentucky and one of only 60 clinical-based education programs in the United States.

One of the key factors in accomplishing the clinical-based model and other future plans has been a significant investment in technology. A $383,000 grant from The Margaret A. Cargill Foundation in 2011 helped to provide a technological infrastructure that includes iPads for faculty members and computer simulations to train the students.

The Cargill Foundation funds also helped develop a partnership with the Kentucky Valley Educational Cooperative, a group of Eastern Kentucky schools whose administrators work with Asbury faculty and students to offer a personalized look at how classroom concepts work in practice.

As part of the partnership, Asbury will provide some classes, professional development and mentoring to second-, third- and fourth-year teachers in the Cooperative. Grant funds will help develop a library of research on both urban and rural poverty, as well.

The clinical model did not originate at Asbury, though it is the first completely renovated clinical program in Kentucky, and one of only 60 clinical-based education programs in the United States. Rather, the concept is based on looking to the “industry” — teachers, superintendents, and state department of education offices — for advice on how to produce the kinds of educators that best serve public school students.

Informing all of the decisions about what works in practice are the classroom experiences of Asbury’s own faculty. Each faculty member has a minimum of five years experience teaching in a P-12 environment, an active license and a bold passion for seeing every child achieve their highest potential. Not only does each professor at Asbury have solid classroom experience, most also have served in leadership in a local school.

“We work under a distributive leadership model,” Lowe said. “Each person has a responsibility for some piece of what we do, based on their skill set, and they have to carry that rather independently. So we report back to each other frequently. With so many leaders in the group, we don’t tell each other what to do — we persuade, we present research. We’re a passionate, noisy, outspoken group, but everyone shares the same vision and the same mission.”

As Asbury builds on a strong foundation of success in equipping teachers to be “classroom ready,” the goals are as specific as giving a new teacher the tools to help kindergarteners master phonics and as broad as changing the way universities throughout the United States approach teacher preparation.

“It’s very important that we do it well,” said Dr. Becky Oswald, associate dean in the School of Education at Asbury University. “We’re not afraid to lead the state or nation, and in many ways we have. If we’re going to change the profession, we need to be in a position to be a voice of Christian influence.”

Dr. Becky Oswald and Dr. Verna Lowe
Asbury University’s leadership team within the School of Education includes educators with experience in state and national accreditation, curriculum development, special education and school administration. Dr. Rebecca Oswald, associate dean and practicum coordinator, is responsible for technology instruction and implementation, and Dr. Verna Lowe, dean of the School of Graduate and Professional Studies, served as dean of the School of Education until June 2012.
If you don’t know who to look for, Asbury University Assistant Professor Joshua Overbay can be hard to find on the film set — he simply blends into the small crowd of college students carrying equipment, referring to scripts and adjusting all of the monitors.

His ideas, however, stand out.

With 14 films to his credit as director and 23 cinema awards — including National Finalist for the Student Academy Awards — Overbay pairs the creative visual expression of an artist with a philosopher’s heart.

“There are a lot of different ways that we can all view movies — as entertainment or as an escape — and those are absolutely fine,” Overbay said. “For me, though, movies have always helped me understand myself better, understand God better, understand the world better.

“In my 20s, it seemed like every movie that I saw spoke to me somehow,” he continued. “It became a very clear calling that this was what I’m meant to do.”

“This” means both creating films that challenge viewers to address tough questions and creating opportunities for Asbury students to learn to speak with their own cinematic voices.

A case study for this calling came in early May and June of this year, as Overbay directed a feature-length film he wrote (along with his wife) entitled, “As it is in Heaven”. Produced by Tracking Shot Productions, where Overbay is co-partner, and Embark Visuals, a production company founded by three Asbury alumni, the film crew included dozens of Asbury alumni and current students, many of whom were working on the project for class or internship credit.

While not officially an Asbury University project, “As It Is In Heaven” certainly had a
student-friendly personality from its inception, right down to its bare-bones budget. In fact, the project was financed by gathering supporters through Kickstarter.com, a Web company that creates a platform for creative entrepreneurs to gather “crowd funding” via social media.

Most of the professional crew and cast members donated their talents and time, and more than 150 backers met the project’s goal of $10,000 — a micro-budget, by feature film standards — in three weeks to make the project a reality.

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The protagonist of “As it is in Heaven” is a doomsday cult leader who must deal with the complicated experience of watching the designated doomsday come and go without event. Sparked by the public confusion of Harold Camping, a cult leader who predicted the world would end last May, and the growing conversation about the Mayan prediction of the world’s end this December, “As it is in Heaven” calls on viewers to confront their own beliefs about the power of fear.

“I’ve always been fascinated about cults, and what fascinates me is that they often seem to start from sincere roots,” Overbay said. “They have good intentions, but something takes a dark turn. With this film, I wanted to approach a cult leader not as a con artist,
but as someone who is sincere, but misguided. My hope is that viewers will not only see this as a cautionary tale about the power of fear, but that they will recognize the same vulnerability within themselves. As a result, they may respond with greater compassion to those around them fraught with fear and suspicion.”

After filming wrapped in June, the movie moved into post-production phase, which includes Asbury University Assistant Professor Barry Blair’s work in audio and sound effects (see article featuring Blair on page 14).

Once completed, the film will be submitted to various festivals, and the conversation that began between a university professor and his eager students will expand to a new audience.

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“Can filmmakers actually talk about faith in a way that’s without an agenda? I’ll always want to wrestle with those very questions.”

Prof. Joshua Overbay
Raised in a slightly nomadic lifestyle, Josh found his direction through film. As a young child, he was captivated not only by the larger-than-life screen, but by the storytelling and relatable characters. He eventually went on to pursue his MFA in Directing for Cinema-Television and is now an assistant professor at Asbury University where he teaches film. Overbay has directed 14 films and won 23 cinema awards. His film “Transposition” was a National Finalist for the Student Academy Awards. He is a co-partner at Tracking Shot Productions and is currently in post-production on the feature film “As it is in Heaven.”
The Asbury University Archives and Special Collections has more than 1,000 of the radio broadcasts produced in a studio on the first floor of the Morrison Building, on Asbury’s campus, between 1932 and 1947. The audio was cut on 16-inch glass records called “electrical transcriptions” and was broadcast over WHAS in Louisville, Ky. A wide radius of states tuned in to the weekly programs.

Through an arrangement with APAD Recordings in Texas, Asbury began to digitize the contents of 100-plus programs several years ago. The first set of 50 has been converted to MP3 format so they can be accessed easily.

The broadcasts represent a part of the rich heritage of Asbury, as many musical voices and speakers were associated with the University, including Z.T. Johnson, who served as Asbury’s president for 26 years; J. Byron Crouse, who was known internationally for his evangelistic and music ministry; and George Ridout, chair of Asbury’s Theology Department in the 1920s, author of numerous holiness books and eloquent missionary speaker. Pastors and theologians will be interested in recorded messages by notable holiness speakers, like John R. Church; public servants like Edward L.R. Elson, chaplain of the U.S. Senate; missionaries such as E. Stanley Jones; and authors, Mrs. Charles Cowman (Streams in the Desert) and Rosalind Rinker (Prayer: Conversing with God).

Additionally, researchers and historians interested in this period of American History will be interested to learn that these broadcasts preserve the thoughts, opinions, customs, experiences and theological perspectives of that period of time in our nation’s history.

The Archives Preservation Project continues to seek funding in order to complete the conversion of the remaining glass electrical transcriptions. If you are interested in further information about this project, or opportunities for supporting the project, please contact the Asbury Archives & Special Collections at: (859) 858-3511, x2292 or e-mail archives@asbury.edu.
By the time Asbury University-trained education majors graduate and become teachers in their own right, they expect to be challenged, tested and held accountable for passing along their knowledge to dozens of independent-minded students — and sometimes all on the first day of school. That’s one of the reasons for Asbury’s recent transition to a clinical-based model that focuses on exposing teacher candidates to a wide variety of situations and styles to increase the number of “tools in their toolbox” (see story on page 6).

Few at Asbury understand the importance of experiencing a broad range of educational settings more than Assistant Professor J.P. Rader. With classroom, administrative and athletic tools of his own sharpened over two decades in schools in the United States and Korea, he has helped facilitate two new clinical field experiences for secondary education majors, showing Asbury students the impact of creative, targeted education.

One clinical experience, called Jaguar Academy, is a program at East Jessamine Middle School in Nicholasville, Ky., for at-risk students. Two-and-a-half-years old, the program was started by Assistant Principal James Botts, a 1993 Asbury alum, as a way of raising attendance, academic proficiency and hopes for higher education.

The Jaguar Academy
Helping At-Risk High-School Students Discover Their Potential
...working with students headed toward dropping out of school, gives Asbury students an opportunity to be a critical part of an intervention to get these middle-schoolers back on the right path.”

Each Friday, 15 at-risk students leave their normal classes to spend the day in a focused environment with a smaller student-to-teacher ratio, a mentoring/tutoring program and a creative thematic approach. In the morning, tutors work with the students to help them catch up academically, and in the afternoon, after a “family” lunch and recreation period, the focus turns to a book study along a monthly theme. Administrators are just beginning to measure outcomes — something Asbury students will help with in the future — but there are indications the program has positively impacted both attendance and academic performance.

For the past year, the tutoring program has been staffed largely by Asbury secondary education majors. This field experience, working with students headed toward dropping out of school, gives Asbury students an opportunity to be a critical part of an intervention to get the middle-schoolers back on a path to success. It also provides more personal opportunities to invest in the students and, with the help of Jaguar Academy campus visits to Asbury and other local universities, inspires a vision of what a college education might look like.

“It’s been so interesting to see how the kids have come to count on our students,” Rader said. “If they don’t come, they get asked about.”

The second clinical experience is a walk-through program at East Jessamine High School. Asbury students — both undergraduate and graduate — spend an afternoon visiting classrooms for 10 or 15 minutes each to observe room management techniques. After the walk-throughs, the students debrief with the principal of the school.

“It’s great for our students to hear the principals explain their philosophy of behavior management in the school, and it’s actually really good for the principals to hear the students’ observations, as well,” Rader said.

Both field experiences are informed by lessons Rader learned through years of working in multicultural educational settings. Stereotypes about the things children of a certain age like, dislike, believe and doubt were quickly dismantled by experiences he’s had.

“What I experienced teaching overseas has been helpful in assisting students here understand and differentiate instruction when they teach,” Rader said. “I can teach Asbury students that you can’t just put all kids in a group and assume they believe the same thing.

“We’ve had strong leadership that raised the bar for both faculty and teacher candidates at Asbury,” Rader said. “Our students are so well prepared now. It’s a case of having all the bases covered before they go into the classroom, so the only thing left is to implement.”

Prof. J.P. Rader — a 1983 graduate of Asbury University — has had a 25-year college and high-school teaching career at Young Harris College, Korea Christian Academy and Seoul Foreign School that includes teaching history, religion and physical education; coaching volleyball and basketball; and serving as an assistant principal and athletic director. During his teaching career, Rader has added three additional degrees including an M.S. in Educational Leadership from Eastern Kentucky University, a Rank One Certificate and a Kentucky Principal’s Certificate. In 2009, Rader was hired at Asbury as the women’s volleyball coach and added the title of assistant professor of education and coordinator of secondary education the following year. He is currently a doctoral candidate at Morehead State University.
Asbury University Assistant Professor Barry Blair is a good listener... a very, very good listener.

“A lot of it is having nice equipment,” he said, looking around the fully equipped audio suite in Asbury’s new, $12.6-million, state-of-the-art Miller Center for Communication Arts. “But there’s still a lot that depends on practice and having a good ear.”

Blair is developing both in a group of students engaged in Asbury’s newest Communication Arts emphasis, Audio Production.

The “lab” for the listeners-in-training is the Miller Audio Suite, a studio outfitted to yield professional-quality recordings for both music production and film. Equipped with some of the best recording equipment in the industry, including the industry standard Pro Tools HD recording software and a Solid State AWS900 recording console, the studio is open for students to practice audio production and recording skills for class projects as well as personal projects.

Leading the program is Blair, a musician-turned-producer-turned-professor whose own career began as a college student at Kentucky Christian University. As the guitarist and a founding member of the Christian rock band Audio Adrenaline, Blair has plenty of experience on the performance side of music production. As a music producer since 1996, he has experience on the other side of the mic, as well.

Now a full-time professor with a MFA in Recording Arts and Technologies under his belt, Blair is venturing into film work. Last fall, he composed the score for the short film produced by one of Asbury’s film production classes, “My Brother, My Brother”. This summer, he is creating sound effects and mixing for colleague Joshua Overbay’s new feature film “As it is in Heaven” (see page 8).

As a professor who desires for film students to call on audio students when they make their films, the first-hand experience is essential for teaching what really works.

“It’s very competitive. Success takes persistence. You just have to be better than your competition. It’s about more than getting a piece of paper when you graduate — the students are here to get really, really good at this.”

“The equipment and the operation of the equipment is essentially the same. The fundamental ideas — such as having an ear for balance, and knowing when something is too loud or not loud enough — carry over,” Blair said. “But there are big differences between music production and film, as well. After doing music for as long as I have done it, you can find the ‘newness’ wearing off a little. Getting involved in films has gotten me interested in a new area of audio I hadn’t done much in before.”
Prof. Barry Blair

Kentucky native Barry Blair spent 20 years in Nashville, Tenn., and has numerous credits as a record producer, guitarist and songwriter. In addition to performing in more than 500 live appearances with Audio Adrenaline, he has worked as a session guitarist for various other artists and recently completed his Master of Fine Arts Degree in Recording Arts and Technologies at Middle Tennessee State University. He has a total of three Dove Awards, four Dove nominations, one Grammy nomination, one RIAA-certified gold album and six No. 1 Christian radio singles.
UPCOMING EVENTS

ASBURY UNIVERSITY
WESLEYAN HERITAGE
BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

The World is My Parish
Wesleyan Concern for the World's Most Vulnerable

October 1-3

Addresses the significance and relevance of Wesleyan thought within the society and culture in which American Christians are living. Through this conference, life-impacting presentations and discussions engage the minds and hearts of the Asbury University community.

A unique opportunity for high-school students to explore and live out a calling into ministry through heart-changing worship, energetic main sessions, and community building. This year’s guest speaker is Brooklyn Lindsey, an author, speaker & youth minister.

The Faith & Culture Lecture Series is a biannual series at Asbury University that invites students, faculty, alumni and noted speakers from around the country to engage in conversation about the intersection of culture and faith.

Business leaders from around the country share wisdom with students based on the principles of Fred Smith, Sr., a consultant who mentored generations of pastors and corporate executives, through one-on-one interaction, workshops and classroom presentations.

October 11-13

faith & culture

October 15-17

October 16-17

FAITH and LEADING WITH INTEGRITY

THE CALL CONFERENCE 2012

Breakfast with Fred
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

OCTOBER 15-17

October 16-17

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