

Britt Jones: Joy in keeping Hardin-Simmons alumni connected

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Britt Jones is the executive director of alumni special programs and trustee relations at [Hardin-Simmons University](#), having served HSU 26 years. She is a member of Pioneer Drive Baptist Church in Abilene. From deep in the heart of one Texan, she shares her background and thoughts on Christian higher education. To suggest a Baptist General Convention of Texas-affiliated leader to be featured in this column, or to apply to be featured yourself, [click here](#).

Background

Where else have you served, and what were your positions there?

- HSU, director of alumni relations and assistant vice president of advancement, 1995 to 2017
- Zachry Associates: account executive, copy writer and media buyer, 1988 to 1995
- Trinity Community Church, Clyde: music director, 1988 to 1990

Where did you grow up?

Abilene

How did you come to faith in Christ?

I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior at a young age. My parents taught

me of Jesus from my earliest days. Solid Sunday school lessons and Vacation Bible School at First Baptist Church in Abilene added to what I was learning at home.

Where were you educated, and what degrees did you receive?

- Hardin-Simmons University, Bachelor of Music Education, 1985
- Regent University in Virginia Beach, Va., Master of Arts in Communication, 1987

About education

Why do you feel called into education/alumni relations?

I love HSU. As an alumna, I actively served on the Board of Young Associates starting in 1987. In that impactful organization for young HSU alumni, we worked together to help further HSU's mission and reach in a variety of ways.

When the director of alumni relations position opened, it seemed a natural fit due to my ongoing association with Hardin-Simmons, coupled with my work in advertising, marketing and writing. Happily, HSU agreed.

What is the impact of education on your family?

My paternal grandmother graduated from what is now Texas Woman's University in the late 1910s, and my grandfather passed the Texas bar around that same time. In the late 1940s, my parents met as students at Hardin-Simmons. They married and moved away before my mother finished her course work, but she was determined to earn her diploma from HSU, doing so several years later after they returned to Abilene. My childhood home was filled with books, and a love of learning was instilled in me early

on.

How does being a Christian influence your work in education/alumni relations?

I look to Jesus for guidance in projects and situations big and small. I try to share his love and grace with others. My heart is to work as if solely for Jesus. The ability to talk freely about Jesus while at work is a privilege.

What is your favorite aspect of alumni relations? Why?

The people I have gotten to know and work with through the years are at the heart of my love for alumni and constituent relations. HSU has amazing alumni and other friends.

What one aspect of alumni relations gives you the greatest joy?

I thoroughly enjoy helping connect people to one another and to HSU, regardless of age or graduation date.

When alumni gather, the common denominator of Hardin-Simmons quickly overcomes any initial awkwardness as strangers become friends. I find it delightful to see such connections happen time and again.

What do you wish more people knew about education?

A university education is about much more than the degree earned. The entire range of one's collegiate experiences combine to provide a rich educational experience.

If you could get one "do over" in education, what would it be, and why?

I would love to have studied abroad one semester, had my circumstances

allowed. Happily, the HSU Concert Choir traveled to England and Wales my final year, giving me a glimpse into life lived elsewhere.

About Britt

Why are you Baptist?

I grew up learning the foundations of the Baptist faith. In adulthood, I have made these my own.

Who were/are your mentors, and how did/do they influence you?

My parents had the greatest influence on my life in myriad ways. My father was a Christian attorney who sought Jesus with his whole heart and life. My mother, a trained teacher and professional secretary, was a prayer warrior who eagerly shared Jesus with others. In my personal and professional life, both of my parents shared wisdom, practical advice and prayerful support.

I learned a plethora of workplace skills from my parents. I also gleaned much by watching Mr. H.C. Zachry, the entrepreneurially hearted owner of Zachry Associates, an advertising, marketing and fundraising firm in Abilene. He demonstrated that, for a new idea to succeed, it must be entered into wholeheartedly and unreservedly, and that brainstorming sessions are valuable in improving an existing “wheel.” Further, H.C. and my father frequently passed along ideas and informative articles to their team members.

What did you learn on the job you wish you learned elsewhere?

Supervisory skills weren’t specifically taught in the classes I took. Jumping into a supervisory role without preparation was very challenging, and I’m still learning.

Other than the Bible, name some of your favorite books or authors, and explain why.

I'm an avid reader so highlighting a few favorite authors and genres is tough.

The Hiding Place and anything else written by Corrie ten Boom. With her remarkable story and faith, her words are inspirational and practical still today.

For relaxation, I often turn to engaging mysteries by new authors such as Clara Benson and Andrew McCall Smith, as well as classic writers like Dorothy Sayers, Margery Allingham and Agatha Christie.

Perennial favorites *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* by Lewis Carroll inspire me with vividly creative and imaginative scenarios and characters.

What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?

Years ago, during a challenging season, I experienced a distinctive dream in which I heard and saw in an ever-enlarging font, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." It repeated several times as if to make sure I got the message based on Philippians 4:13. This verse has continued to encourage and remind me to look first to Jesus Christ and then at the "things."

Who is your favorite person in the Bible, other than Jesus? Why?

The apostle John lived a life of love—of being loved by Jesus, of giving love to others, of recognizing the source of true love is our God, Yahweh. John had a long life, and his writings reflect a continued and maturing appreciation for the inestimable value of extending and receiving love and

grace.

Name something about you that would surprise people who know you.

Although I can sing, I can't whistle.