Today, higher education faces a stark choice: Reinvention or extinction.

These are tenuous times for universities and colleges, both public and private. The economy has altered the American landscape to a degree unseen in our lifetimes. Government funding for higher education has plummeted, college costs have soared, and student debt is nearing crisis level.

Increasingly, we live in an era of reflexive doubt. People have doubts about the economy. They have doubts about the future. They doubt themselves. Some even doubt higher education.

For years, few questioned that colleges and universities are the gateway to the American dream. As costs have soared nationwide, the value of a degree has become a question for debate. These are challenging times, but I believe that moments of great challenge are moments of greatest opportunity.

What this challenging moment demands is simply the best of us. What this moment demands is for colleges and universities to exercise their power as the central force in the creation of progress.

We must look up from our desks, our computer screens, and our phones. We must think hard about the needs in our neighborhoods and in cities and villages around the world. We must have the vision to re-imagine what education can and should look like in the 21st century. Then we must have the will to make that historic change happen.

We must make real, strategic decisions about academic direction, about programs for investment and disinvestment, and about how we meet today’s enormous challenges. We must finally learn to say the word “no,” a word rarely used in higher education.

We must be nimble, versatile, risk-tolerant, and innovative. We need to create reward systems that prize quality and effectiveness. And we need to build trans-institutional structures that foster collaboration.

The old term “multidisciplinary” no longer does this concept justice. Disciplines themselves will need to change, becoming more flexible and permeable. Today’s global problems do not fit in neat disciplinary boxes. Our students are not preparing for a future that will demand only narrow sets of skills.

We must be problem-solvers, people who collaborate, who imagine, who create, and who are not afraid to fail. If we know the answer before the question is asked, then we can never offer an innovative, original solution. If we stay rigidly married to a structure or set of rules laid down in another era with another reality, we can never adapt to take full advantage of our own capabilities.

In this important moment, we must go beyond the answers we have always given and the boundaries we have always maintained. We must never forget that our schools—all types and all levels—are where the mind and the imagination flourish. We are repositories of human achievement, sanctuaries for the human spirit, and incubators of human aspiration.

We cannot allow this transformative moment in our nation’s history to shatter the system of education that is the envy of the rest of the world.

As presidents, we must be the advocates for the value of higher learning. I firmly believe that expanding economic prosperity in this country depends upon expanding the size of our imagination. Imagination today is what steel was 120 years ago—the very building block of progress.
The great fortunes of the world were once forged by muscle and sweat in the mills. Increasingly today the great fortunes of the world are amassed from products of the mind. Smokestacks were once the metric of prosperity. Today, it is the college bell tower.

We live in an era when ideas will be the catalysts of virtually all future economic progress. When critics question the value of a degree, we must make the reality clear: It is more important than ever to possess the knowledge and skills acquired on a college campus.

For people aged 25 to 32, the earnings gap between college graduates and those with a high school diploma is higher than ever. According to Pew Research, millennials with college degrees made about $17,500 more in 2012 than their peers with high school diplomas earned.

Having an educated populace is also more important to our nation’s future than ever before. To produce the skilled workers our country needs, colleges and universities must graduate about forty percent more students by 2020, according to a McKinsey & Company report.

Professions that have not traditionally required a degree are now finding they must rapidly keep pace with new technological advancements and evolving levels of expertise. This includes the critical thinking and complex reasoning skills honed in college. Industries from insurance to nursing to manufacturing are increasingly seeking college graduates to meet the demands of a fast-changing global economy.

I recently led a national Commission on Higher Education Attainment for ACE that worked to open the door of opportunity to more students. In this effort, we must see our fellow institutions as allies, not opponents. There is infinite room in American higher education for improvement, expansion, and collaboration. We must reach out, as never before, to others of good will and common intent. We must initiate wholly new kinds of collaborations that extend our missions more completely and effectively to every corner of our nation and beyond.

Three hundred million Americans are looking to higher education for solutions. They are looking to us because of the uniquely powerful role that education has played in America—to fulfill our country’s founding ideal of a meritocracy based on ability and action, to sustain our democracy through an informed citizenry, and to right the wrongs of bigotry and oppression.

Marylouise Fennell, RSM, former president of Carlow University (PA), Senior Counsel of the Council of Independent Colleges, and Scott Miller, President of Bethany College (WV), have collected and edited provocative essays from presidents on the front lines of today’s higher education challenges.

Higher education is grateful to presidents Eduardo J. Padron, Miami Dade College; John Broderick, Old Dominion University; Santa Ono, University of Cincinnati; Walter Harrison, University of Hartford; Robert C. Helmer, Baldwin Wallace University; Renu Khator, University of Houston; Walter M. Kimbrough, Dillard University; Karen A. Stout, Montgomery County Community College; Patricia McGuire, Trinity Washington University; and Robert E. Johnson, Becker College, for contributing essays that advance inspiring ideas for re-imagining higher education in the 21st century.

I encourage you to read these insightful essays that explore topics ranging from alternative funding sources and strategic partnerships to student engagement ideas and non-traditional learning models. I believe they will stimulate your own ideas for creative problem solving and innovation.

Booker T. Washington once said, “Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome.”
Washington once lived in my current home state of West Virginia. He moved there with his family in 1865. He was nine years old, a newly freed slave, and he went to work with his stepfather in the local salt mines. His mother knew he had bigger dreams, though. She bought him an alphabet book.

For years, he rose at 4 o’clock each morning so he could practice reading and writing in the hours before his work day started. At age 17, Washington walked 500 miles from Malden, West Virginia, to Hampton Normal Agricultural Institute in Virginia. He convinced the headmaster to admit him, and he worked for the school as a janitor to help finance his education.

He went on to become the first leader of what is now Tuskegee University, and built it into a leading institution. He paved the way for other African-American leaders who would go beyond his efforts in fighting for legal and social equality.

Booker T. Washington is a testament to the power of education. He is also a testament to the drive Americans have always shown for overcoming obstacles—for, literally, scaling mountains.

As college and university presidents, we have mountains to climb. But I truly believe that the best days of American education lie ahead of us—on the other side of those mountains.

In the choice between reinvention and extinction, extinction is not an option. Too many people depend upon us. Public or private, two-year, four-year, research, and liberal arts—each of our institutions has a sacred responsibility. We are America’s future!

Dr. E. Gordon Gee — Currently serving for a second time as president of West Virginia University, Dr. E. Gordon Gee has been a leader in higher education for more than three decades. In 2009 Time magazine named him one of the Top 10 university presidents in the United States. In addition to his service at West Virginia University, Gee served as president of The Ohio State University (twice), Vanderbilt University, Brown University, and the University of Colorado.

Born in Vernal, Utah, Gee graduated from the University of Utah with an honors degree in history and earned his J.D. and Ed.D. degrees from Columbia University. Before starting his career in higher education, he clerked under Chief Justice David T. Lewis of the U.S. 10th Circuit Court of Appeals and was a judicial fellow and staff assistant to the U.S. Supreme Court, where he worked for Chief Justice Warren Burger.

Gee’s service to education-governance organizations and commissions is extensive including the American Association of Universities and the American Council on Education’s Commission on Higher Education Attainment. He also has written extensively on law and education, and is the co-author of 11 books, including Law, Policy and Higher Education published in 2012.
Preface and Acknowledgements

Dr. Marylouise Fennell, RSM, Senior Counsel for Council of Independent Colleges
Dr. Scott D. Miller, President of Bethany College

Is the American higher education model broken? Plenty has been written by those outside of higher education (press, legislators, and parents) as well as within (faculty, administrators, and trustees) concerning the state of higher education and its continued viability. From enrollment trends, to financial challenges, to disruptive technologies, theories abound as to the future of higher education.

However, what has not waivered is higher education’s ability to adapt, perhaps slowly, to a changing environment. The challenges facing institutions have caused many to develop innovative programs, operating practices, and unique approaches to remain relevant and competitive.

Perhaps it is precisely because of the current economic environment that the tenets and impacts of sustainability deserve a second look. Indeed, the Triple Bottom Line creates quantifiable benefits to society, the environment, and an institution’s financial standing. Some institutions are embracing sustainability and are leading the way for others. Some campuses are advancing sustainability to solve multiple problems. Can or even should their approaches be emulated? What lessons can be leaned from these institutions to help those facing greater social and economic pressures. How can sustainability move from the perception of being a “cost center” to one that is part of the broader solution set to today’s higher education?

Driven by cultural, technological, and economic challenges to the current education model, creative and innovative solutions are emerging. The time has come for leaders in higher education to create, engage, and innovate; working together to source new solutions that will help ensure the future of the industry. Authored by notable presidents whose institutions are in the forefront of innovation, the 2014-2015 series of Presidential Perspectives tackles how higher education is creating “Inspirational Innovation.”

Now in its ninth year, Presidential Perspectives endures due to the generosity and innovation of Aramark, a leading provider of award-winning dining and facility services to colleges and universities. Each month, a different presidential chapter is distributed electronically and posted on the Presidential Perspectives website www.presidentialperspectives.org.

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- Annie Miller, Scott’s wife of 30 years, a dedicated supporter of education, who has loyally served as “first lady” of three colleges
Dr. Marylouise Fennell, RSM, is an internationally recognized management consultant in higher education. Dr. Fennell specializes in independent higher education as a mentor, counselor, search consultant, and consultant to Presidents, Administrators, and Boards of Trustees of colleges and universities, and to for-profit businesses who serve the non-profit sector. She is a partner in the search firm Hyatt-Fennell, LLC.

Dr. Fennell brings a unique perspective to her specialty—namely, an intimate knowledge and respect of the presidency and higher education administration. She has served as President of Carlow University; as Assistant Dean of the Graduate Division of the University of St. Joseph; and has been a tenured faculty member, Department Chair, Division Chair, founder and Director of the Counseling Institute, Director of the Pastoral Ministry Institute, and founder and Director of the Cross Cultural Counseling Symposium. Prior to these assignments she served in teaching/clinical/positions at the University of Hartford and Boston University. Dr. Fennell is the first graduate of the University of Hartford to be named a college president. In 1999, Governor Tom Ridge named Dr. Fennell a Distinguished Daughter of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Fennell received her degrees in Education, and Counselor Education from the Diocesan Sisters College (B.A.), University of Hartford (Masters of Education) (Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies), and Boston University (Doctor in Education).

She is the Senior Counsel for The Council of Independent Colleges and has been the chief consultant for the Association of Private Universities of Central America. She has assisted the Central American Universities in the establishment of an accreditation system and is the author of the Central American Accreditation Guidelines for Excellence in Education. Dr. Fennell served for twelve years as the Executive Director of the Interamerican Consortium of Higher Education (CIDES). She is a consultant to numerous associations, colleges, and universities.

Honors bestowed on Dr. Fennell include the Peace Through Education Award from the SAGE Scholarship Program, the Distinguished Alumni Award of the University of Hartford, the Athena Award, Pittsburgh Leadership Award in Education, The Mercy Higher Education Colloquium Leadership Award, Pennsylvania Hardworking Women Award, Pittsburgh Women of the Year Award, Pittsburgh Woman in Education Award, Outstanding Black Catholic Service Award, Pi Lambda Theta Distinguished Research Award, Award of Service to Women and Children, and the Boston University Outstanding Alumni Award as well as approximately 45 honorary doctoral degrees and numerous awards from universities and colleges throughout the world.

Dr. Fennell is presently serving or has served on numerous boards including Huntington Bancshares Incorporated, Clarke College, Robert Morris University, Mercy College of Ohio, The Art Institute of Pittsburgh (Chair), The Art Institute of Los Angeles (Chair), The Art Institute of Charlotte (Chair), The Art Institute Online (Chair), The Art Institute of Seattle (Chair), Asher School of Business (Chair), Bradley College of the Visual Arts (Chair), The Art Institute of New York City (Chair), The Art Institute of Seattle, The Art Institute of Portland(OR), New England Institute of Art(Chair) and has been Vice Chair of the McGillick Education Foundation, and Chair of the Western Pennsylvania Health System Foundation, and Educational Management Foundation. She has been a Director of SKY Financial Group (OH), Standard Mortgage Corporation (GA), Frontier Financial, Three Rivers Bancorp, Omni Staffing Service, as well as a past trustee of more than sixty boards. She was the first woman to be elected to the Board of Directors of the Duquesne Club which was founded in 1873. Dr. Fennell has written or co-authored more than 90 articles on Higher Education and has co-edited eleven books covering numerous subjects in higher education including one that has been translated into Spanish. She was the first woman to be elected to the Board of Directors of the Duquesne Club which was founded in 1873.
Dr. Scott D. Miller is the President and M.M. Cochran Professor of Leadership Studies at Bethany College in West Virginia.

Now in his 24th year as a college chief executive officer, Dr. Miller served for 10 ½ years (1997–2007) as President of the College and Du Pont Professor of Leadership Studies at Wesley College in Delaware. He also has served as President of Lincoln Memorial University (1991–97). Before being named president there, he served as executive vice president (1988–91) and vice president for development (1984–88). A native of Pennsylvania, Dr. Miller is a former director of college relations and alumni affairs at Rio Grande College (now the University of Rio Grande) in Ohio and a former journalist.

Dr. Miller earned his B.A. degree in Communications from West Virginia Wesleyan College, M.A. in Educational Administration from the University of Dayton, Ed.S. in Higher Education Administration from Vanderbilt University, and Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration from The Union Institute & University.

Well known nationally for his contributions to higher education, he was one of 17 presidents nationwide featured in a Kaufman Foundation-funded book entitled “The Entrepreneurial College President” (American Council on Education/Praeger Series on Higher Education, 2004). Dr. Miller and the Wesley story were one of four amazing transformational stories featured in the book “The Small College Guide to Financial Health” (National Association of College & University Business Officers, 2002) and one of six featured in “The Small College Guide to Financial Health: Weathering Turbulent Times” (NACUBO, 2009). He was extensively interviewed in “The First 120 Days: What A New President Much Do” (Jerold Panas, 2008). He is a regular columnist for “The Huffington Post,” “College Planning and Management,” “Enrollment Manager,” and “The State Journal,” and is the author of a widely distributed e-newsletter, The President’s Letter, which addresses a wide variety of higher education issues.

Both Drs. Fennell and Miller serve as consultants to college and university presidents and boards.
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Inspirational Innovation

CHAPTER 1

Co-Op 2.0:
Why Experiential Learning Matters
Co-Op 2.0: Why Experiential Learning Matters

Dr. Santa J. Ono, President, University of Cincinnati

A mobile app to test for concussions. A job-training and job-readiness center disguised as a retail pizza parlor. An inexpensive way to make nearby water safe for hundreds of villagers to drink in a community in Tanzania. If this were a game of “Jeopardy,” the winning question to these clues would be “What are three examples of the power of experiential learning?”

But the beauty of experiential learning lies in the fact that it’s not a game at all. It’s not even a test. It’s reality. And the question for the clues above could just as easily be: “Why does experiential learning matter?”

Because nothing else can substitute for the real thing. In the same way that a real orchid looks and feels more exquisite than a fake one, so is gaining knowledge by experience. Experiential learning is “exquisite learning.” Think back to when you learned how to ride a bike or how to write your name, and you’ll understand what this means. You had to learn those by doing. And doing so transformed your life.

We need to make sure that more and more college students get the chance for the same kind of metamorphosis, especially in these times when the value of higher education is often questioned.

Institutions of higher learning across the spectrum take pride in the transformational impact of a college education. It is no coincidence that when I travel across the country to visit our graduates, it is cooperative education that our alumni most frequently credit for their own evolution into successful adults.

Today, at the University of Cincinnati, we have decided to not only expand opportunities like this, we have also made a commitment that prior to graduation we want no fewer than 100 percent of our students to complete at least one experiential learning assignment. It helps that UC has a long history of experiential learning as the birthplace of cooperative education in 1906. But other institutions can and do start from scratch. Benedictine University in Springfield, Illinois, is just one example of a liberal arts college embarking on this path anew. The State University of New York system has also made efforts in recent years to bolster its co-op programs under its SUNY Works program.

“Our surveys of students who co-op and complete internships show that the vast majority of these students find the experience they gained on the job enhanced their understanding of the theory they had learned in class, and it helped them develop soft skills and greater self-understanding” (Clare, Hall, Sharp & Straka, 2013).”
Our experience with cooperative education began with the world’s first co-op program—a vision of Herman Schneider at UC and first put into place in 1906. More recently, we have formally expanded and renamed it Professional Practice and Experiential Learning (PROPEL). Informally, we refer to it as Co-op 2.0. In many places outside the United States, particularly with growing strength in Australia, educators have taken the concepts launched by Schneider and redefined them into what they term “Work-Integrated Learning.” The World Association for Cooperative Education uses the phrase “Cooperative and World-Integrated Education.” But rather than debate semantics, as sometimes happens in academia, it’s time to celebrate this broadening of educational opportunities for students and focus more on why this kind of learning matters so much. In my view, the most compelling reasons relate to Experiential Learning’s (EL) transforming effect on students, on the curriculum and the institution, and on the world beyond.

**Students**

I already mentioned the hands-on nature of this kind of learning and its eureka-like impact on the learner. EL also contributes to student success. Our data have shown that co-oping (and EL by extrapolation) leads to higher retention rates and higher graduation rates (Clare, Hall, Sharp & Straka, 2013). In our colleges where co-op is mandatory, the first-year to second-year student retention rate is 89.3 percent compared to the 85.6 percent for students in the colleges where co-op is not mandatory. In an even more pronounced way, the six-year graduation rate of students in colleges with mandatory co-op reaches 11 percent higher (73.7 percent vs 62.3 percent) than students in UC’s baccalaureate programs at large. Recent tracking data also show that among our baccalaureate freshmen, those students who have had at least one experiential learning course are retained to the sophomore year at a rate of 87.5 percent compared to 82.7 percent for those with no EL coursework.

Our surveys of students who co-op and complete internships through UC also show that the vast majority of these students find the experience they gained on the job enhanced their understanding of the theory they had learned in class, and it helped them develop soft skills and greater self-understanding (Clare, Hall, Sharp & Straka, 2013).

Experiential learning also has a positive impact on student satisfaction. Looking at the 2013-14 National Survey of Student Engagement results, our senior undergraduate students who have interned, co-oped, or participated in student teaching or clinical placement are more likely to evaluate their UC experience as “excellent” and are more inclined to say that they would “definitely” go to UC again if they could start over.

Looking at life after graduation, the recent Gallup-Purdue Index Report (May 2014) finds that college graduates’ ability to engage at work and thrive can be closely related to whether they felt connected to a professor in college who made them feel excited about learning or if the student had an internship or job that allowed them to apply what was learned the classroom (The 2014 Gallu-Purdue Index Report). Such bonds and job experiences often come about through service learning and co-op (Clare, Hall, Sharp & Straka).

Also transforming and welcomed from the student’s—and parent’s—perspectives in the case of co-op is the financial reward. While wages are not always available for other types of experiential learning, real earnings paid to co-op students translated into a collective $49 million at UC during FY 2014. That averages out to $10,000 per co-op student per work semester, a figure nearly equal to our in-state yearly tuition. Likewise,
it would require an endowment of nearly $1 billion to match this. Taken together, co-op students at seven of the top co-op institutions in North America took in an aggregate amount ranging between $300 million and $400 million (Cedercreutz, Clare & Todd, 2013). Less quantifiable is the fact that money paid in wages also means real responsibility rather than the stereotypical coffee-fetching, and the debate about paid vs non-paid internships would require another chapter to explore.

**Curriculum and Institution**

In the process of transforming students, EL also leads to a continuous cycle of assessing and improving the curriculum and the institution. The change-agent becomes the deep collaboration that grows between the university or college and the employers, government agencies and non-profit organizations that seek our students and faculty out to address the real problems they face.

With more than 1,800 co-op employers, 300 internship employers, and 250 community partners for service learning courses, our links to the business and civic world keep us in touch with what concerns them most and what they seek. Our assessment tools, developed with support from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), tell us so much that when we changed the timing of one engineering course from the second year to the third year we heard about it and changed it back the following year.

These connections are not only vast, they also are deep with positive ripple effects in other aspects of institutional life, including strategic planning, private support, faculty support, and even athletic spirit. As a result, our experiential learning partners feel a greater sense of buy-in and identity with the university, and all of this makes my job as president easier.

**The World Beyond**

Equally exciting to me is the potential transformation that experiential learning brings about outside the student and the institution and into the world writ large, whether at home in the local community or in a town on the other side of the globe. Here are several examples:

- A newly-issued patent for the Boeing Airport Transportation System, resulting from our trans-disciplinary Live Well Collaborative, an experiential learning studio focused on the aging Baby Boomer generation. It envisions an individualized way to serve travelers from the airport entrance to their destinations.

- An inflatable bike helmet suggested by the Design + Nursing Collaborative studio focusing on reducing concussions. The same studio sparked the concept for a mobile app to check the optic nerve for signs of concussion, and a researcher at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center is pursuing grants to do more research and testing.

- Building an improved oil expeller and developing a bio-fuel production system to extract biofuel from the seeds of the Jatropha plant, a common brush that grows as hedges in Senegal in Sub-Saharan Africa. Involving a non-profit named AYWA International and UC engineering, design, business, and arts and sciences students and faculty, the project’s aim is to increase the efficiency of farming, optimize the farmer’s working conditions, and generate economic growth in an environmentally sustainable way.
• Designing and building a village school in the community of Burere as well as designing the first health center located in the village of Roche, both located in Tanzania. Students and faculty have also begun work on a distribution system to supply water to 7,000 residents in the region. Coordinated through the Village Life Outreach project founded by UC alumnus and faculty member Christopher Lewis, the projects in Tanzania have involved hundreds of students and faculty in engineering, design, architecture, nursing, medicine, and more.

• Proposed transit hub designs, traffic engineering, bike-way paving design, and environmental assessment as well as concepts for redevelopment opportunities associated with a 6.5-mile bike trail planned in east Cincinnati near Xavier University. Students in engineering, planning, real estate, and geography worked on the projects in our Niehoff Urban Design Studio.

Across our region and around the world, the challenges are numerous, and the students and faculty in higher education institutions have much to offer and much to learn by taking them on. Yet even with all of the benefits that experiential learning offers to society at large, to our students, to the curriculum, and to the university, academia still often looks upon hands-on learning as something lesser, something critics disparage as “vocational education” (their words, not mine).

Yet Craig Vogel, one of the founders of our Live Well Collaborative that works with multiple corporations and has a sister collaborative operating in Singapore, counters this by calling EL “thorough learning.” “The students in our studios get more freedom and the responsibility that comes with it. Through faculty coaching, we empower students to use their imagination and ability to come up with solutions. It is not just lecture and providing information. It’s coaching, advising, guiding, and questioning—letting them come up with an answer I could never think of. That’s a much richer form of education,” he says.

Mila Baker, academic chair of the MS program in human resource management and organization development at New York University, echoes that idea in her book, “Peer to Peer Leadership,” although the book is not specifically about EL. As she worked on a major merger after earning her PhD, she realized she was “beginning a transition from scholar-practitioner to practitioner-scholar... I realized that the act of doing the work was very powerful and significantly influenced by thinking about the work.”

Both Vogel’s and Baker’s comments sum up why we believe in EL so much that we work with universities across our region and around the world to share our model with them. With Chongqing University in China, we have just begun a Joint Co-op Institute with China’s first mandatory co-op program. In the state of Ohio, UC has received state funding to work with the College of Mount St. Joseph, Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, University of Rio Grande/Rio Grande Community College, Shawnee State University, and Xavier University to develop stronger infrastructure for co-op and internship programs.

It still concerns me, however, that so many parents and students don’t understand what co-operative education and experiential learning are, and therefore don’t know what questions to ask when shopping for a college for their sons and daughters. For many savvy parents, co-op is the first program they ask about. But for higher education as a whole, the exquisiteness of EL remains underestimated and underappreciated.

A quote attributed to Confucius is often associated with experiential learning: “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.” Like so many proverbs, it is so much more than cliché. It speaks to what is truth. But when it comes to experiential learning, I worry that another proverb often associated with
Confucius also rings true: “Everything has beauty, but not everyone sees it.” Higher education, and most of all we as presidents, must do more to recognize the unheralded advantages that experiential learning offers and make sure that our students and their parents understand it as well.

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References

http://www.waceinc.org/about.html


Dr. Santa J. Ono, is the President of the University of Cincinnati, a top-25 public research university with an enrollment of 43,000. He is also a highly accomplished researcher in eye disease and a member of several national and international honorific societies as well as a sought-after public speaker, frequent opinion leader on higher education issues, and a recognized trailblazer in the use of social media. Serving as UC’s president since August 2012, he has gained a reputation as a chief executive who is accessible and responsive to the university’s wide range of constituents, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, business, civic, arts, and government.

Prior to his appointment as president, he served as the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost at UC. He holds appointments as Professor of Pediatrics in UC’s College of Medicine and Professor of Biology in its McMicken College of Arts and Sciences. Before his arrival at UC, Dr. Ono served at Emory University as Vice Provost for Academic Initiatives and Deputy to the Provost and then Senior Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs. Earlier in his career, he also served in a variety of teaching, research, and administrative positions at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Harvard Medical School and the Schepens Eye Research Institute, University College London (UCL), and Moorfields Eye Hospital in London.

He was elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 2012 and inducted as a member of the National Academy of Inventors in 2014.