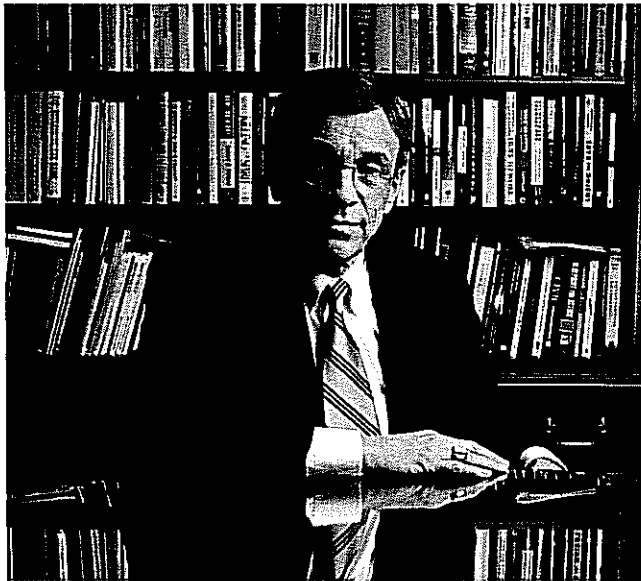


DR. JAMES VOTRUBA

President, Northern Kentucky University

BY HOWARD MCEWEN, CFA | PHOTO BY JONATHAN WILLIS



DR. JAMES C. VOTRUBA has served as President of Northern Kentucky University since 1997, a 10-year period during which the school has made unprecedented progress. NKU is the fastest-growing university in Kentucky with an enrollment that has reached 15,000 students and a faculty and staff of nearly 2,400. In the past two years, NKU has added two impressive structures to the Highland Heights campus: the \$37 million dollar, 144,000-square-foot student union and the 10,000 seat Bank of Kentucky Center, which will be the site of approximately 130 events ranging from sports to concerts. And, according to Dr. Votruba, they are just getting started. Recently, Cincinnati Gentlemen sat down with the man leading NKU into the future.

CG: WHAT ARE YOUR ONE, THREE, AND FIVE YEAR GOALS FOR NKU?

VOTRUBA: Our immediate goal is to manage the impact of the current economic recession in a way that does not compromise either student access or academic quality while still being able to make critical investments in high-demand programs. Longer term, our plan is to grow the university to 23,000 undergraduates by 2020, maintain the "up-close and personal" nature of the student experience, which we believe is second to none, position ourselves to be nationally competitive for

the very best faculty, and provide national leadership for the role of universities in advancing key regional goals like those contained in Vision 2015 and Agenda 360.

WHAT DO YOU WANT NKU'S ROLE IN KENTUCKY TO BE?

We have made a major university-wide commitment to supporting economic growth and enhancing P-12 education. Our Kentucky Math Center is working in all 120 of Kentucky's counties to support improved math performance at all levels. Our College of Informatics is on the leading edge in advancing Kentucky as a national prototype for e-health. Our Center for Integrative Science and Mathematics is a national model for P-12 math and science outreach. Our new Haile/US Bank College of Business is reaching out to support business development as well as the internationalization of our business graduates. In short, NKU is not an end in itself. Rather, it is a vehicle for achieving both regional and statewide progress.

FOR A CHILD BORN TODAY, HOW DO YOU ENVISION NKU WHEN THEY ENTER AS A FRESHMAN?

Eighteen years from now, the entering students will find a campus that is larger, more diverse, more international and offering a broader array of undergraduate and graduate programs aligned with the needs of our region. The curriculum will involve fully integrated "high-touch and high-tech" courses relying on both face-to-face instruction along with web-enhanced learning. Courses will be offered in a time, place and manner most supportive of students. Eighteen years from now, an entering student will find more students living on campus and they will likely be attending NCAA Division I athletic events.

HOW DO YOU, AS PRESIDENT, WORK WITH PEOPLE RANGING FROM STUDENTS TO THE GOVERNOR TO MAKE THESE GOALS A REALITY?

I begin with the assumption that everyone wants their life to stand for something... to be part of an effort that is larger than themselves. This is what gives meaning and purpose to life. The most effective leaders I've known are ones who have a fundamental belief in the importance of their work and in the capacity of those around them to accomplish great things. I deal with a very broad range of people, all of whom are important to the work that I've been asked to do. I try to understand the world from their perspective and I try to communicate my belief in our collective capacity to accomplish things that others may not believe possible. In my view, it's this faith in human possibilities that gives life to relationships and is the foundation on which effective leadership is built. **CG**

Howard McEwen is a Chartered Financial Analyst and a regular contributor to Cincinnati Gentlemen.

NEW VENTURES

RACING AHEAD

Bluegrass Motorsports Park

BY HOWARD MCEWEN, CFP



FOR THE 28 MILES to Sparta, Kentucky, the maximum speed limit is 65 MPH on I-71, but once there, speed is only limited to the vehicle you brought and

your driving skills. Four miles from the Kentucky Speedway is the soon-to-be-completed

Bluegrass Motorsports Park, a 500-acre site with four road courses that will be to racing what the country club is to golf.

The park is open to everyone from amateurs to professionals. It includes: a road course, a kart track, skid pad - a track used to test a car's handling - a clubhouse, an academic center, driver's lounge, suites for spectators and personal garages. There are plans for a private development with lakefront property and trackside views.

"At country clubs they use drivers, at Bluegrass we make drivers," says park founder and CEO Brad Poppell.

"It accurately describes what the motorsports

club offers," he says. "Remember, the 'country club' is just an exclusive element within Bluegrass Motorsports Park which has amenities to satisfy the grassroots driver and rider to the professional race team. With respect to the motorsports club, there is still a similarity among other sporting club amenities that makes a club attractive for membership."

The centerpiece is a 2.5-mile road course designed by former racer and television personality Derek Daly.

"We offer a 3,200-foot straight, which is one of the longer ones in the U.S.," says Poppell. "We also have over 100 feet of elevation change, a compound banked turn (eight degrees high, six

TODD HENRY

A Fortuitous Accident

BY CRAIG J. HEIMBUCH | PHOTO BY JONATHAN WILLIS

IT HAPPENED BY ACCIDENT. Todd Henry, 35, who has worked in creative roles his entire career, was frustrated and he wanted to talk about it. "I kept running into the same issues over and over and when I would talk with other people at agencies, they were having the same frustrations," says Henry. "So, I thought maybe we could all benefit from talking about it."

At first, Henry recorded a few conversations he had with creative directors about issues related to managing the creative process, maximizing creative output and finding a way to balance management expectations with the creative process. He put the conversations on iTunes under the name *The Accidental Creative* and, for all intents and purposes, forgot about them. It wasn't until months later, while browsing business podcasts that he came across a popular one called "The Accidental Creative."

"At first I thought, 'Oh no, I stole someone else's name,'" he says. "Here was one of the most popular business podcasts...it wasn't until I clicked on it that I realized it was mine."

THE ACCIDENTAL CREATIVE WAS BORN

In the time since his accidental discovery of his accidental success, Henry, who works full-time as the creative director for Crossroads in Oakley, has parlayed those initial conversations about the frustrations he was having into a web-based consultancy business. But, he hasn't abandoned his roots by any stretch. He still records conversations with creative leaders from Steven Pressfield, influential author of *The War of Art* and *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, to Mattel/Hot Wheels Creative Director riCardo Crespo, best-selling business guru Seth Godin to productivity icon David Allen, about the common pitfalls of working in the creative services industry and solutions to creative management problems.

The popularity of the podcast has thrust Henry into a spotlight of his own. He is routinely asked to speak to companies nation-wide on how they can let their "creatives" be creative while maximizing output, setting realistic expectations and meeting customer demands. He has also established accidentalcreative.com, a web community that encourages conversations about the creative process by asking questions such as: "Are you a contributor or participant?"

"I can't believe how many times the issues on this site come up in our daily work," one subscriber said.

"What I find exciting is that Todd helps de-mystify the creative process," another wrote on the site.

Creativity is not an ethereal issue and creative professionals don't



always have their heads in the clouds, according to Henry. Ultimately, creativity and creative professions involve solving problems, whether they relate to branding initiatives or writing computer code, manufacturing processes or writing novels. Anything having to do with solving problems involves a certain amount of uncertainty that can lead to frustration. *The Accidental Creative* and accidentalcreative.com are meant to foster dialog between creatives so they can learn from one another's experiences and frustrations in order to make the whole creative process run more smoothly, even when it seems to happen by accident. **CG**

degrees low), multiple apex turns, and decreasing/increasing radius turns that will challenge the novice (and) professional participant."

However Bluegrass Motorsports Park is a business in a sputtering economy, a reality not lost on Poppell.

Besides Poppell, BMP has six other investors, whom he describes as entrepreneurial and self-made. "It is important to have entrepreneurs on your team," says Poppell. "Because they understand that your plan is only as good as yesterday's information and adapting to the market is essential. It's the dynamic nature of a start-up, which attracts me to this aspect of business."

That doesn't mean that they're pedal-to-the-metal, steering wildly into blind economic turns. "This entire project is about risk management," says Poppell. "Whether on the track when a customer is going 150mph or with the development of the project and future expansion."

The park has kept half of its land undeveloped to accommodate future expansion "once leading economic indicators show our risk is reduced," Poppell says.

"My philosophy was simple, minimize the amount of expenses on advertising and focus on injecting the capital towards earthwork and progress," says Poppell. "If I pre-sold all the

memberships, it still would not have gotten the track built, so the energy was focused on making it a reality. The membership level is approximately at 50% of its maximum.

"This far in advance of the first car on track and the state of the world economy is an extraordinary statistic that reflects the solid value of our product," Poppell says.

Poppell plans to open the park in the spring. "Our primary goal is to satisfy the immediate needs of our consumers in 2009," Poppell says, "and then we will grow with the economy and reduce our risk so we do not over-develop and increase our liabilities at such a fragile time in our economy." **CG**