

IDEAS PEOPLE G. MICHAEL PRATT

Regional campuses

'built to be flexible'

By Eric Robinette
Staff Writer

G. Michael Pratt, Miami University's dean of regional campuses, shared with the Journal-News his ideas about how the regional campuses in Hamilton, West Chester and Middletown weave into the overall fabric of Miami University and the community at large.

Q: How did you come to be involved with the regional campuses?

A: My wife, Patty, and I are from Middletown, attended Miami Middletown for a year and a summer and then relocated to Oxford. We are Miami alumni and a Miami Merger. While Patty was visiting family, she learned that the Middletown campus was searching for a new dean and, of course, an opportunity to return to Miami, family and home was intriguing to both of us. I was then at Heidelberg University where I had come up through faculty ranks to direct a branch campus and then was appointed Dean of undergraduate and graduate programs in Business, Education, Counseling, and Athletic Training. I was also conducting archaeological research and serving in a consulting role as a forensic anthropologist. I liked my career, but when the job description was changed to seek a Regional Dean for multiple campuses, I felt it had been written for me. I threw my hat in the



Miami University Dean of Regional Campuses G. Michael Pratt says, "Miami University's regional campuses will provide the best regional campus experience in the state."

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ring, made it through the interview process and accepted the offer.

Q: What has been the biggest change with those campuses since you took the helm? Or if you can't pick one, describe the overall change in recent years?

A: Since joining Miami University, I have overseen the development of a regionally organized and administered campus sys-

tem, the addition of new bachelor's degrees in Health Information Technology, Criminal Justice, Civic and Regional Development and Forensic Science and Investigation, and new concentrations in our Bachelor of Integrative Studies. I give full credit to our outstanding faculty for conceiving and developing our new degrees. We also strengthened the pathways for regional campus students to

relocate to Oxford to finish more than 100 other degrees offered there. During my tenure we opened the Greentree Health Science Academy and founded an English Language Center for international students. We also implemented an automatic merit scholarship, and established the College of Professional Studies and Applied Sciences in Hamilton and Middletown, of which I am the first dean.

Q: What is the best value of a regional campus? How might that be a better choice than the full-on campus? Or a good supplemental choice?

A: Whether it's a job, a family, or financial obligations – we understand these realities influence what students are looking for in an education. That's why we're built to be flexible. We offer classroom courses in a semester format, and sprint courses that finish early or start late. We offer a variety of courses in hybrid and online formats, and we will soon have entire degree programs in online. Our students can take courses at our Hamilton, Middletown and West Chester locations according to their own schedule; and, if they desire to attend courses in Oxford, they can ride a bus and forget about parking.

Our regional locations are designed to help you further your education close to home. At the regional

campuses, you can pursue your four-year degree in a program created to help fill current career needs. And we'll help you with logistics such as on-site childcare, free tutoring, and career-building services.

Q: How many students are or will be enrolled at the regional campuses?

A: Head counts for 2013-14 academic year total 4,342 at Hamilton and 2,748 at Middletown. The students attending classes at our Voice of America Learning Center in West Chester and Greentree Health Science Academy on the Atrium Medical Center Campus are included in these counts.

Q: What is the difference between the Hamilton and Middletown campuses, other than location?

A: All of our academic programs are offered at both campuses, and students are free to take courses at all of our regional locations. Due to nearly 50 years of independent development and operations, student organizations are somewhat different and each campus has its own competitive sports teams – the Hamilton Harriers and the Middletown Thunderhawks. They are great rivals, and always competitive in the Ohio Regional Campus Conference (ORCC).

Q: What role do the re-

gional campuses play in community life?

A: We are in and of the communities we serve. Our outreach and civic engagement is thriving through many different channels and programs, from Miami Hamilton Downtown, Verity Traditions at Miami Middletown, and the regional Artist Series, to numerous lecture series, service learning and internships. The communities are enriched intellectually, culturally, and financially – not to mention the sense of pride and ownership engendered by the campus-community connection in Hamilton and Middletown.

Q: How do you see the regional campuses evolving with Miami's vision in the future?

A: Miami University's regional campuses will provide the best regional campus experience in the state, enhanced by accessible and affordable undergraduate and graduate degrees in the College of Professional Studies and Applied Sciences.

In support of Moments that Transform: The Miami 2020 Plan, we will enhance the learning experience of our students with additional bachelor's and master's degrees, in even more flexible formats and with a greater connection to the developing economy and job market of the region.