Raul Chavez is Looking to God For Guidance

By Beth Klima
Style Editor

It only takes a few moments talking with Chavez before one somehow gets the motivation to finish that paper, lead that Bible study, review for that test, and somehow manage to maintain frigid indoor temperatures when it’s 70 degrees outside.

Chavez is associate professor of Business at EMU and believes that he obtained the position due to divine interaction. He accepted the post three years ago, after EMU officials had stumbled across his resume, sent in years before by a friend of Chavez’s. “It was God’s will,” he concluded. Although Chavez has taught at other universities before coming to EMU, this is the first time that he has taken a full-time position.

Indeed Chavez is passionate about the department. He is pleased that the Business department is becoming more and more academically prestigious. “It was God’s will,” he continued. Chavez chose engineering. Ultimately, however, he decided to pursue business instead when one of his teachers wrote him a note, prompting him to consider the field.

“I wonder if he realizes he changed my life,” Chavez pondered. For Chavez, this experience serves to underscore his belief that professors really can alter the paths of their students. “Teachers can change lives,” he stated.

Chavez enjoys having a healthy rapport with his students. He believes that the ability to get to know each student as an individual is due to the fact that EMU is a smaller, more intimate university. “I know my students by their names. That is impossible at a large university,” he stated.

Chavez has a few words of wisdom. “I have noticed that our students have made, ”I have noticed that our students excel,” he stated.

Chavez was raised in Ecuador, and later relocated to the States to obtain his Master’s and Doctoral degrees. The descendant of Italian and German immigrants to South America, Chavez is no stranger to diversity. “I have family in many countries…. I see myself as a global citizen,” he said.

When first thinking of starting his career, Chavez chose engineering. Ultimately, however, he decided to pursue business instead when one of his teachers wrote him a note, prompting him to consider the field.

“Teachers can change lives,” he stated. “I believe that faith plays a major part of how we teach and how we learn,” he said.

On a more personal note, Chavez is married with a seven-month old baby boy. In his free time, Chavez enjoys reading, creating new projects, oil painting, and dancing. “Growing up in a tropical country, dancing is a part of life. Rhythm is part of life,” he said.

“Upon arriving here, I was told that Mennonites don’t dance…they do in fact dance very well,” he joked.

As spring arrives, and the senior class here at EMU gets ready to go off into the world, Chavez has a few words of wisdom. “Despite general negativism, be hopeful. It is an exciting time,” said Chavez. For those not graduating in April, Chavez says to enjoy time left at EMU.

“I have taught at many other universities, and I have to say it’s just a very nice place to be,” he added.

As far as faith is concerned, Chavez believes that it is important to let God have control of our lives. “I believe that God is the one that is leading the boat, we are just fishing. He is the captain,” Chavez said.

As current world events continue to unfold, students remain divided on key issues. Chavez recognizes that this is a particularly sensitive time forEMU students, as there is continuing debate regarding the U.S. and Iraq. He feels that it is important for the student body to perpetually discuss the issue.

Chavez believes that although EMU students will continue to fiercely debate this topic and others, it is important not to judge each other. He feels that there is indeed some common ground to be found. “Respect would be the common ground,” he said. For those of us who question whether or not we are really making a difference in life, Chavez offers this bit of encouragement: “The world will be changed, one person at a time.”

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