

## No bones about it, Glassman leads interesting career path



A typical dilemma faced University of Minnesota undergraduate student Dave Glassman in the mid-1970s. As a freshman, Glassman was on course to study business with an accounting major.

Then he became redirected. Glassman was taken by one anthropology class taught by the late Rupert Murrill. He tried another anthropology class. Then another. Soon, Glassman faced a crossroad. A single student on a sprawling, urban Big Ten campus not far from the safety of his home in nearby St. Paul, Glassman could continue on the business track with likely multiple job opportunities. Or he could

follow the unknown detour to his developing interest in anthropology, with fewer career opportunities.

“I became passionate about anthropology,” Glassman said, speaking with the same energy that fueled his decision-making in those college-student years. “My mind moved away from business. The human condition really enthralled me.”

Glassman discussed the matter with his parents, who leaned toward staying the course with business. He listened to their practical side, then followed his yearning to explore anthropology, receiving a bachelor’s degree in 1976. “My parents questioned why I would do that (switch to anthropology). I said I don’t know, but I sure do love it.”

That was perhaps the first turning point decision for Glassman on a university campus. Since then, he’s experienced many others. Now, age 61 nearly 40 years later, Glassman embarks on a new phase. On Monday, he becomes the president of Eastern Illinois University, having been appointed to the position on March 2 from a group of four finalists.

Creating an environment that facilitates stories like his own undergraduate journey, joining in transformational voyages like he experienced spending summers in Belize with students from Texas State University, and promoting the economic and social impact universities have on regions they serve are among the items that drive his desire to take his first presidency.

Glassman recently spent 90 minutes discussing his career that now leads him to East Central Illinois. As university president, he becomes a leader both on campus and in the region. No doubt the experiences described here will help guide his thinking as he looks to impact enrollment, funding, curriculum, and related areas facing higher education.

Degree in hand, Glassman inquired about his options. It was suggested he write to an anthropologist engaged in excavating bones in Mexico. He did, and the written reply was an invitation to join the crew. All he had to do was write back that he was coming, and he had to pay for his travel to do work for which he received room and board, but no pay.

He scabbled together some money from graduation gifts to afford airfare to Mexico City, then used various transportation modes to the Morelos State in south-central Mexico. Morelos is the second smallest of 31 Mexican states. Today the state is a place where residents of Mexico City spend weekends or have second homes. Evidence of the first human inhabitants in the area extends to 6000 BCE, with the first settlements about 1500 BCE.

Glassman remembers the team stayed in a church in a small town. The five-man crew spent its days excavating Aztec skeletons, carefully uncovering layers, looking for details that would open windows to previous eras, traditions ... ways of

life. Glassman had prior experience analyzing skeletons; this was his first experience with excavation, the uncovering of bones and related items.

The investment and sacrifice he and his family made in a college education was taking its first step outside the campus boundary. While not personally profitable economically, he was excited about the value of the experience and relationships.

Glassman returned to the United States after a couple of months, but soon was summoned by another anthropologist in Mexico who was paying a small wage. “I got paid in pesos. Unfortunately, it came at a time when there was devaluation of the peso,” and thus made his earnings worth less.

As Glassman’s interest developed and a couple months passed, it became clear that graduate school was in his future. He said there were two leading anthropology programs at the time. He visited the University of Tennessee, where, without an appointment, he found himself in conversation with the chairman of the department, William Bass.

Bass offered on the spot that Glassman could start the next semester (just a few months away), which he did.

At the time, Bass worked in the burgeoning field of forensic anthropology. Today Bass has a 5,000 square foot building dedicated in 2011 named after him for his work with human remains, a building in which observation of decomposition of remains is observed daily.

Forensic anthropology involves identification of people who died in unnatural situations, including murders. Some of the cases involve bodies that have been scattered. Other were buried, burned in fires, submerged in water, or killed in mass disasters.

Asked about his leadership style, Glassman said it developed from his academic experiences and interactions working with others. When he saw something he liked, he put the thought in a mental file to use. Other times he's seen things he chooses not to use.

A welcoming visit and discussion with a professor like Bass no doubt is in the "to be followed" category.

Bass, in a phone interview from Knoxville, Tenn., said Glassman is prepared for his new assignment in multiple ways.

"He knows his bones," Bass said of Glassman. "He knows research. When there is a question such as 'is this bone male or female,' he goes through the literature, the steps to make the determination. He's also a great person. He's smart. He has a good personality. Of my masters and doctoral students, he was one of the people you want to be with."

The skills Glassman used in anthropology also work in administration, Bass said.

"He is a person who listens. He talks to people. He thinks. He tries to give both sides of an issue equal time. He approaches things from a logical standpoint."

Forensic anthropologists work with law enforcement to identify remains.

Glassman's been board certified for 45 years, the 44<sup>th</sup> person to receive the certification. He said he's worked 300-350 cases including all those situations cited above except a mass disaster. His most famous case involved identifying noted atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair, her son, granddaughter and one of the murderers. Glassman's first position post-Tennessee was in 1980-83 at Virginia Tech, where as first an instructor and later an assistant professor he taught anthropology, engaged in research regarding skeletal aging and functional anatomy in nonhuman primates, and consulted with the Virginia State Medical Examiner in human identification casework.

"I have always loved teaching since I started doing it as a graduate student," Glassman said.

His approach attempts to emulate those who had the most influence on him. In so doing, he lists a few keys:

"Right off the top is enthusiasm and love for what you do," he said. "I love anthropology.

"Students are positively affected by engagement. I try to get them engaged and thinking, and get their opinions brought out. When you get their opinions out, then you can discuss them

“Students also appreciate organization. They want to know you have an agenda, you have outcomes you see for the class and a plan for getting there.”

From Virginia Tech Glassman moved to the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research in San Antonio, Texas, where he worked as a postdoctoral scientist from 1983-85 in the Department of Cardiopulmonary Disease. The research dealt with issues such as effects of social stress on the development of atherosclerosis, differences in infant growth from breast-fed and bottle-fed, and socio-behavioral data on captive baboons.

In 1985, he was back on a university campus as an assistant professor at Texas State, formerly Southwest Texas University, in San Marcos. He was promoted to associate professor in 1988, to professor in 1992, to chair of the Department of Anthropology in 1997 and Associate Dean of Liberal Arts in 2003.

For 11 years, Glassman was one of the Texas State faculty to accompany students on trips to Belize, a Central American country bordered by Mexico, Guatemala and the Caribbean Sea. Students stayed for five-six weeks, working firsthand with bones, another culture and being immersed in what Glassman described as transformational experiences.

The trips started flying to Belize City, where students boarded old buses. “As they started looking at the environment, you can see in their faces this is something unrecognizable to them,” Glassman said.

“We had permits to excavate prehistoric Maya archaeological sites,” he said, both structures and human remains.

“It was no picnic.”

Students typically walked through mangrove swamps to arrive at the excavation site. They burned termite mounds to smoke out mosquitoes. Some years they lived in tents on a beach. In later years, accommodations improved a little.

“It was hard work,” Glassman said. “It was hot every day. The students were excited. They had unbelievable experiences. It was transformational.”

The work involved filling buckets with dirt as they sought remains that would tell them about people from previous eras. They hiked to the worksites. About noon out came the spam, sardines, crackers and little sausages that accounted for lunch. Initially, the students used caution. “Five weeks later, they are talking and interacting with townspeople. They are completely comfortable as if they lived there for years.”

Not all students were headed for careers in anthropology. But all learned from being part of teams that adapted to a new culture while carefully sifting through what to most of us look like piles of dirt to find clues that piece together the past. When working with bones like the Aztecs in Mexico or the Maya culture in Belize, one purpose is to learn about ways of life and survival. Students also considered how people thought. What kinds of items were placed with the body in burial, for

example? “You learn something about their culture, how they dealt with death,” Glassman said.

Anthropologists like Glassman engage in three types of work: field work like that in Belize, analysis in a lab, and expert testimony. The lab analysis comes with every case. Expert testimony is reserved for criminal cases that go to trial.

The process of unearthing bodies starts with shoveling off layers. When a body part is found, the anthropologist moves to a hand trowel to more carefully find remains. The next step is to use dental picks.

In identifying remains, an expert can determine the person’s age, gender and the manner and cause of death. Usually an anthropologist can establish a person’s height, and perhaps isolate diseases.

This was Glassman’s world. He embraced it.

Glassman said there was no grand plan to move up in the administrative ranks. He said he was encouraged to consider applying for the promotions by people who considered him collaborative, resourceful, and a sound decision-maker.

“I never went into academics thinking I want to be a leader of a department or a university,” he said. “I just wanted to be in the classroom.”

At Texas State, he systemically moved up in rank, eventually to associate dean.

Again, he was encouraged to consider a next step.

When he applied to become a dean, the offer he accepted in 2004 came from the University of Southern Indiana in Evansville.

Linda Bennett, now the president at Southern Indiana, was the provost who hired Glassman as dean, working with him for six years.

“He’s direct. He has a great sense of humor as well. He understands how to deliver a message, how to say something and make his point,” without turning people away, Bennett said. “He has tact because he cares about people.”

Bennett said Glassman understands how to organize diverse sets of people to assess and make recommendations on how to be more effective. At USI, he was in the liberal arts college, the most diverse on campus of varying disciplines.

Glassman was “extremely effective at fundraising,” to the point some people still remember their connection to Glassman, Bennett said. That included developing more support for performing and fine arts as well as social sciences, where the school now has an anthropology program.

Bennett called USI’s appropriation the lowest in Indiana, yet the school finds ways to initiate productive new ventures. “We manage because we make hard choices. The last thing you want to do is waste human capital.”

She said Glassman was part of that process. “He’s a great builder of teams. He’s definitely hands-on, or at least was here. He understands what the problems are on the ground and then addresses them. He looks to create way to do things.”

Bennett called Glassman “one of the most delightful people I’ve worked with.”

One thing that makes him effective, she said, is Glassman collaborates and communicates. “Transparency, that is his first impulse is to be open with what he is doing. At Southern Indiana, we have open public hearings on the budget.

Sometimes people think, oh, they’ve got money over there. Quite often, there isn’t money where people think there is. We stood up in front of the room and talked about those things.”

Glassman’s engaging style shouldn’t be confused with softness. Once information has been developed and analyzed, Glassman will act, she said.

### **Glassman the administrator**

Of the people he tries to emulate in his leadership style, Glassman noted both Bennett and Bass, who he said “showed passion for research, for students and for service.”

Glassman said he didn’t learn or adopt any one leadership style. He’s watched others, used things from styles he’s seen as effective and noted things he considered ineffective.

He said he used to think leaders were automatically trusted until or unless they gave people a reason to think otherwise. “I’ve flipped on that one, now I see you have to build trust. You have to demonstrate you have their best interests, to show

that you will perform in an honest way, an equitable way, and that you're open and transparent in decision-making.

"In today's environment, you've got to take a hard look at what you're doing," Glassman said. "It may be something you've done a long time and people enjoy, but if it doesn't attract students, is it right?"

From 2010 until May 31, 2015, Glassman was provost and vice president for academic affairs at Bradley University in Peoria, a private school in the backyard of the corporate headquarters of international conglomerate Caterpillar Inc.

The provost manages the campus' \$50 million instructional budget as well as an \$83.2 million endowment. At Bradley, Glassman helped lead things like creation of the Turner School of Entrepreneurship and Innovation. "The school is the first of its kind in the nation by not being embedded in a college organization but rather "free-standing" to serve students in all five colleges and the graduate school in entrepreneurship education, activities, and mentorship," Glassman wrote in his VITA.

He chaired committees that designed new structures such as a Business and Engineering Convergence Center and remodeling of the Davis-Cullom Library. He supported developing new academic programs in entrepreneurship, social media marketing, hospitality leadership, computer game technology, and video game design.

“There is nothing there I did on my own,” Glassman said. “Many of the ideas came from somewhere else. I helped get them achieved.”

Glassman said he considers his role like the sweeper in the sport of curling. The sweeper creates a buffer for the rocks in curling, as Glassman said the provost helps buffer obstacles that arise between good ideas and their implementation.

“I’m the sweeper to get things out of the path so the idea is achieved,” Glassman said.

Asked if the reverse is true, that some programs need to be dropped, he said that may merit consideration. “You make assessments,” Glassman said. “That (changes or eliminations) is always possible.”

He said such decisions are not totally market driven, though programs need to be attractive to students.

Perhaps more than at other times in history, higher education faces more competitive forces, including ones that offer low-cost alternatives through digital and other mobile delivery systems. Those methods can be effective in transferring knowledge, but Glassman said there’s still value in residential environments like he experienced at Minnesota.

“The residential university experience is truly the best experience for the 17 to 22 year-old student who is able to do so,” Glassman said. “It should be affordable and accessible.

“Technology is good for transferring knowledge,” he said. “There is so much more to education than transferring knowledge, inside and outside of the classroom.”

That includes looking an advisor in the eye, taking part in cultural and athletic events, being part of a campus community. “This is a holistic approach.”

Technology utilization within the resident experience can and should enhance learning through things such as blended and flipped classes, he said. “But it (technology) doesn’t replace the residential experience.”

For those who have the residential experience, including many graduate students, more technology and less residential makes sense. So Glassman embraces technology and the pace of change, but when possible sees the traditional residential environment optimal for the recent high school graduate.

At a school like Eastern, there are multiple challenges to that model. Some high school enrollments are down and competition for students is up from neighboring states making aggressive pitches financially. Some traditional EIU strengths are in less favor than they once were. State funding and the economy in general are challenging in Illinois. And as noted above, higher education overall faces multiple challenges from new entrants made possible by technological advancements that can act quickly to embrace a fast-changing world.

Eastern and Illinois certainly aren’t alone in such challenges.

What sometimes is overlooked are the benefits derived from university educations. Glassman said there is no question universities are economic drivers that build the economy, and that must be part of the message delivered to those setting state budget priorities.

“To have a university education is a catalyst for workforce development, innovation, civic engagement. We’re creating an ethical citizenry, developing the arts. Eastern is a cultural magnet in the region. It is a magnet for athletics and sportsmanship.

“If the state is interested in economic development and workforce development, and the arts and a fulfilled life, universities are great resources.”

So, the challenges are multiple, and as president Glassman will find his role on campus now is even broader than as chief academic officer. As he considers that, he thinks back to when he started moving into administrative and leadership roles.

“What made me interested in moving from dean to provost and provost to president is if I’m making a positive impact on an increasing number of students, why wouldn’t I want to do that?”

