When invited to consider authoring this foreword, my immediate reaction—before reading the book—was, “Gender & Diversity in Christian Higher Education”… sounds like a potential minefield! My instinct was to decline the invitation due, in part, to aversion to entering an atmosphere that can be fraught with difficulty and incivility. Christian higher education represents a critical crossroads where some of our deepest rooted passions connect: faith, teaching and learning, fairness, and the modeling of exemplary polity. A natural tension exists between the interpretation and application of these things about which we are passionate, and sometimes that tension turns from productive conflict (“iron sharpens iron”) to counterproductive entrenchment.

Among the noble ideals of higher education, and even more so Christian higher education, is the conviction that the academy should be a free marketplace of ideas. If we as educators truly hold in our bones a commitment to that facet of our enterprise, we must intentionally embrace the opportunity to be exposed to information and ideas that challenge what we think we know. Gender and Diversity Issues in Religious-based Institutions and Organizations stands as an excellent example of what’s right in Christian higher education: bright minds applying reason, research, and insight with an eye toward improving Christian colleges and universities and maximizing the impact of their missions to the greatest degree possible. Drs. Glimps and Ford have assembled a superb collection of contributors, resulting in a fascinating read that will both challenge and serve as a resource to leaders at all levels within Christian higher education! Additionally, the text encompasses research from diverse cultures from Kenya, to Israel, to Latin America, and provides an exploration of non-Christian social and educational practices.

I had the good fortune to be a colleague of Dr. Blanche Jackson Glimps early in my higher education career. I was in my first academic position and she was the vice president of academic affairs in a small, Christian college with little racial diversity and a theological tradition that was, at times, considered stifling to women. I was immediately impressed with this diminutive woman whose presence overshadowed her posture. As one of a literal handful of non-white members of the campus com-
munity, she was conspicuous; however, the more I got to know her, the farther skin color got bumped down the line in terms of a mental list of adjectives to describe her. Passionate. Smart. Encouraging. Collegial. Productive. Warm. Challenging. Engaging. She was also blessed with a sense of humor that I appreciated very much. I remember entering her office once and she had a bowl of white and black jelly beans. She was picking out the white ones and offered them to me saying with a sly grin, “I only like the black ones!”

Having known of the excellent scholarly work of Dr. Glimps for many years, I was delighted to receive a draft of the book you now hold (or view on an electronic screen) through which she and Dr. Theron Ford enlist the help of an impressive group of contributors to explore some of the most pressing and important issues facing Christian higher education today.

While reading the book I vacillated between feelings of encouragement, embarrassment, whole-hearted agreement and disagreement. As the president of a small, intentionally Christ-centered university, I found much in these pages that challenged me. If I were to create an overlay of best practices and good principles mined from this book and applied it to my own leadership and university environment, there would be many areas exposed as needing improvement.

I hope that you will immerse yourself in these pages as I have, as a learner who consciously desires to make Christian higher education a tool used to the glory of God.

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