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In Focus

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IN FOCUS: PROFESSOR JIWON YOON

By Danielle Nye

Dr. Jiwon Yoon has been teaching for over a decade all over the world. She now teaches communication courses at Northwest University, and is constantly inspiring and informing students on how to be better communicators.

Dr. Yoon, a former Handong University student, had always wanted to teach at a Christian university for the academic freedom of linking her own faith to the course work. The opportunity simply never came around until now. Before NU, she was teaching at a university in Chicago and living there with her husband. Her husband got a job opportunity in Washington and, since he had been following Yoon's career path for 12 years, she decided to follow him. Yoon looked for university jobs near her husband's work, found NU.



Dr. Yoon: Photo by Joey Stack

"God brought me here," she said.

Washington State is very different from Yoon's previous homes of Chicago and South Korea, but she loves the weather and how Seattle offers not only ocean and mountains nearby, but a large city as well.

Yoon noted that not only the location was different, but at NU *everything* was different from other schools she had taught at – among both her colleagues and students.

At previous work environments, Yoon said her colleagues were more distant and kept more to themselves, whereas at NU she experienced the great sense of community.

"I feel like the way they care for me and the way they want to include me as their colleague, coworkers, faith community, is very different and I appreciate that," she said.

Yoon also noticed the students at NU were different.

"Their faith influences their work ethic. They don't just work here for a degree or a good job; I can see my students striving to be a tool to be used by God. I have so much respect for my students... they work really hard. I feel so humbled that I can be a part of their journey to find their calling in their life," she said.

As Yoon joins the NU community, she joins the focus on increasing diversity.

"Because we are a faith-based community, we don't address certain things," Yoon said. "I can see students and instructors, and maybe myself, monitor and censor what they are saying because it could make people uncomfortable.... I think we should be a safe community to discuss those uncomfortable topics because you'll only be here for four years, and you'll have to face these issues every day, so we can't shelter students from these issues."

Yoon said this can take place not only by the university "actively recruiting more diverse students and faculty members," but by offering "courses where students can academically approach those issues... courses where students can [study] cultures, communication styles, socio-political issues, equality, and racial issues."

"In my previous school, students had to take one non-western course (i.e. Race in Society, Diversity in Media), and students usually took multiple courses even though only one is required. I could see them changing overtime as they studied white privilege and institutionalized racism... It's something we can implement [at NU] which will prepare students for international students and different groups of people," Yoon said.

Yoon encouraged students considering communications as a major.

"Communication is the basis for everything; whether human, media, interpersonal, etc.—we live within communication... Jesus himself was a very strong communicator who effectively communicated his messages using different techniques, parables, emotions, etc. We still learn his words because he was such a good communicator. Communication can change the world," Yoon said.

Yoon said God has impacted her in being able to dream beyond her capability.

"I know my limitations, but I still have big dreams, visions, because I know it's not just about me and I want to be used by God and his work and bigger picture" Yoon said. "...I can trust God, even though I don't know his direction; even when going through hardships, God will never waste your pain.

"Even if you see yourself as little, you can see it's not *you*, but *God* who will make everything right and put things together. Even if I make mistake and am disappointed in myself, I can see that despite my weaknesses, he can make something good out of my weaknesses," she said.