



*Dr. Brower serving on the Fermanian Business Center fall 2008 Professional Development Event panel, "Responsible & Profitable: The New Era of Sustainable Business"*

Dear Friends,

Saying that we are living in "unusual economic times" may be the greatest of understatements. Each of us has become much more aware of the complex interrelatedness of the national and global economies.

In this time of change, we also have become more alert to the complexities of our consumer-based economy. With the many positive innovations created over previous decades, we also developed a tendency toward overconsumption and the depletion of environmental resources. Rather suddenly, we all became very aware of the debt and financial strain created upon individuals, families, and governments as a result of some far-reaching financial excesses. This recent phenomenon of easy financing for a multitude of consumables has pushed debt from a long-term, high value investment to quickly

consumed commodities. Debt with a purpose – homes, education, transportation, etc. – was replaced by debt for ease and convenience, perhaps without us even noticing the change.

One of the opportunities in these unusual times is to re-examine priorities and values that shape our lives and contribute to the quality of the lives of others as we give our service, ministry, and care. Our examination of self and others may lead us to shift our spending, saving, and borrowing habits, as well as to expand our vision of how to help and serve others, particularly in this time of greater need. As Christians, we are continually called to care for and to serve the "least of these" as we let God's love show through our serving and giving to others. Today, even in "unusual times," we are still called to that kind of serving and caring.

The choices we make and the demands of so many competing priorities are not easy. However, re-examination and clear commitment to those people and things that are most important provides joy and hope even in times of uncertainty.

In this issue of the *Viewpoint*, we examine aspects of consumerism and giving. I hope it raises some thoughts, poses some questions, and encourages each of us to reflect upon our own life, priorities, and opportunities for care and service.

Positively,

Bob Brower, Ph.D.  
President

## CONTRIBUTORS

### Viewpoint Staff

Michele Corbett..... Creative Director  
Christine Spicer ..... Editor/Sr. Writer  
Marcus Emerson ..... Art Director  
Dave Bruno..... Staff Writer  
Tim Caton..... Illustrator/Designer  
Jill Chou ..... Designer  
Gayle Yelvington..... Distribution Coord.

### Guest Contributors

Brian Becker ..... Guest Writer  
Bethany Leach..... Guest Writer  
Jessica Petrencsik..... Copy Editor  
Crystal Pridmore..... Alum News Coordinator  
Katrina Sinift..... Copy Editor  
Sheryl Smee ..... Editorial Advisor  
Andrew Yates..... Guest Writer  
John Wright..... Guest Writer  
Deborah Zal..... Guest Writer

### Postmaster

Send address changes to  
*Viewpoint*, PLNU  
3900 Lomaland Drive  
San Diego, CA 92106-2810

Ph: (619) 849-2246 • Fax: (619) 849-2579  
viewpoint@pointloma.edu  
www.pointloma.edu

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