

Dr. Franz H. Reneau



Photo Credit: Dr. Franz H. Reneau

Dr. Reneau was born in Belize City to parents Dr. Cecil Reneau (deceased) and Nina Reneau. He attended St. Joseph Roman Catholic Primary School and then went on to Edward P. Yorke High School in Belize City. He attended the University College of Belize (UCB) Belmopan Junior College and later the main campus in Belize City, where he earned his undergraduate degree in Business Administration. Directly following his graduation, he had the opportunity to pursue graduate education in the United States (US), which landed him at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, KY. After earning his Master's Degree in Business Administration with an emphasis in Economics and Finance, Reneau took a job working for a Fortune 500 company. He spent almost seven years at Target Corporation and rose to the rank of Senior Store Executive prior to making the decision to go back to school to pursue a doctoral degree in Higher Education Leadership. When asked, what was the trigger that influenced his decision to go back to school, Reneau replied that he came from a long line of educators and public servants who dedicated their life's work to helping others. He went on to say:

“My roots, and years working in corporate America, ignited the desire in me to go back to school to learn and develop the skills necessary to work in a space that would allow me the opportunity to not only shape and influence young minds, but at the same time better educational outcomes for students.”

Reneau earned his doctoral degree from the University of New Orleans under the mentorship of Dr. Mariette DeFavero (deceased). He has over a decade of experience working in Higher Education at multiple post-secondary institutions in the US. In his current role, he serves as the Director for Assessment at Georgia Tech, where he is charged with the responsibility of

providing leadership and oversight of the Institute's academic assessment and evaluation processes. When asked if he ever dreamed of coming to the US to go to school when he was a student in Belize, Reneau said

"The short answer is no. I had grand plans leading up to my graduation from the University College of Belize. I was going to get a job, marry my girlfriend, who I began to date while in high school, and hopefully, there-after, have a few kids in that order. However, God had a different plan for me. Leading up to my graduation, my father presented me with an opportunity to further my studies in the US. I could not then have imagined how much that opportunity would have changed my life's trajectory."

Reneau went on to say that while he did not dream that his path would lead him to the US, he took advantage of the opportunities presented to him in Belize to travel a road that opened new horizons for him and his family. He expressed a strong bias for education and, more specifically, the role that education plays in social and upward mobility.

"My father would always tell me as a boy growing up. "Son, education is the greatest equalizer. It does not matter where you come from — the sky is the limit." Those words have shaped much of my thinking around education. Like my father, I too believe that education is the greatest equalizer, and more importantly, a necessity for the survival of society. If you subscribe to the thinking of philosopher and educator John Dewey, it is a necessity for responsible citizenship."

Reneau's passion for education as a tool for social and upward mobility has pushed him to use his talents not only to create more awareness for his home country, but also to engage fellow Belizeans who are interested in higher education opportunities in the US. During his tenure at Florida A&M University, he led visits to Belize with graduate students and faculty to bring awareness around how business is conducted in the country. During those trips, students and faculty had opportunities to exchange and learn from various stakeholder groups to include the Belize Chamber of Commerce, Banks, Government Officials, Bottling Company, Small Businesses, and non-profit groups. Reneau said that:

“Students had the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge and frameworks to study how business is conducted in Belize.”

Reneau expressed a strong passion for Belize. For him, the best part of being a Belizean is woven into the words in our national anthem “Tranquil haven of democracy.” He went on to express that Belize is unique, unlike any other country, and all that one needed to do was to travel beyond the borders to appreciate the jewel that is Belize.

“Having grown up in a country so rich in diversity allowed me at a very young age to develop a love and appreciation for all things Belize. Our people, barrier reef, rain forests, Mayan Ruins, rivers, diversity of wildlife, food... these are all the things that bind us together and, for me, the best part of being Belizean.”

When asked, what he would say to students back in Belize who were considering dropping out of school, Reneau had this to say:

“I would say to them, stay the course. While you may not be able to see beyond your current circumstances, if you stay the course, one day you will be able to see beyond the horizon. Don’t allow your current circumstance to predict your future outcomes. Know that regardless of where you come from or where others think your aptitude lies, you are in control. Your future is dependent on the decisions that you make today and the journey is not an easy one. In this journey you will come across naysayers, people who do not like you because of how you look or how you speak; you may come across people who are in a position of power who may try to derail your trajectory. The decisions that you make today will not just impact your life tomorrow, but could impact the legacy that you leave behind. Don’t be afraid to dream big. Today is the day that you take the first step with the end in mind, as this is where you will find the strength to persevere on your journey. While you are on your journey, don’t forget to reach back to help others along the way.”

Throughout his career, Reneau has conducted numerous accreditation self-study reviews and has supported many academic and non-academic programs in their re-accreditation preparation. He has undertaken project evaluations for several state and national grants to include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Environmental and Cooperative Science Center (ECSC), NOAA Center for Coastal and Marine Ecosystems (CCME), ICPALMS, Florida A&M University (FAMU) National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) Accelerating Academic Success grant among others. He has consulted with non-profit agencies and charter networks in the area of mixed-method program evaluation. His higher education academic experiences include college student retention efforts, academic advising, institutional effectiveness, and program and project evaluation.

Reneau is the Co-Founder and Co-Chair of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) – Collaborative for Excellence in Educational Quality Assurance, a group committed to helping to demonstrate the effectiveness of HBCUs through the use of best-practices in assessment and evaluation by leveraging the collective expertise of assessment and institutional effectiveness professionals and other stakeholders. Dr. Reneau served as the 47th President of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (MSERA), a nonprofit incorporated educational research organization whose purposes are to encourage quality educational research in the Mid-South and to promote the application of the results of quality educational research in schools. He is married to his high school sweetheart Dr. Paulette Reneau, also a Belizean with whom he shares two kids (Alessandra and Laila Reneau).