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Former Disney VP, Attorney and Entrepreneur to Teach Business Ethics at Williamson College

FRANKLIN, Tenn. (May 21, 2012) – Jim Cumbee’s career has spanned the worlds of law, politics, Harvard Business School, commercial real estate, entertainment, Christian music and mergers and acquisitions. Now he’s about to apply the lessons he’s learned about integrity and doing what’s right as the instructor of a new business ethics course at Williamson College.

“Jim’s vast skill set and unique gifting, combined with a biblical worldview, will benefit the students at Williamson in a remarkable way,” says Dr. Ed Smith, President of the college. “We are honored to have him join our faculty in the School of Business.”

While taking a break from law school, Cumbee served as traveling aid to Missouri Gov. Kit Bond and struck up a friendship with Missouri Attorney General John Ashcroft, who shared Cumbee’s love of gospel music. After Cumbee graduated from the University of Missouri at Kansas City School of Law, Ashcroft offered him a job as assistant attorney general, where he handled a variety of legal tasks and frequently traveled with Ashcroft.

Ashcroft went on to become Governor and later, U.S. Senator, of Missouri followed by an appointment as U.S. Attorney General under President George W. Bush.

After his stint in the attorney general’s office, Cumbee worked on Bond’s second election campaign as director of field operations. When Bond won the election, he named Cumbee assistant director of the State of Missouri Department of Consumer Affairs, Regulation and Licensing. Cumbee eventually decided to pursue a career in business over politics. He was accepted into Harvard Business School, where he earned an M.B.A.

After graduating from Harvard in 1984, Trammel Crow hired Cumbee as marketing principal in the company’s Orlando office, where he spent the next six years developing and leasing office buildings. In 1990 the Walt Disney Company approached him to

become part of its commercial development team. Cumbee was soon promoted to vice president of the Disney Institute and later was vice president of Disney Vacation Development.

His love of music eventually drew him into Christian radio when he purchased Reach Satellite Radio Network, a satellite-delivered radio programming service broadcasting southern gospel music to more than 100 radio stations across the U.S. He eventually sold this company to Salem Communications where he became president of non-broadcast media. In 2009, Cumbee transitioned into being the owner and managing director of the Tennessee Valley Group in Franklin. The firm matches business owners who want to sell their companies with investors looking to buy companies.

“Ethics is fundamental to me because I believe the basis for business success is found in Scripture,” Cumbee said. “In my career I never heard anyone say ‘we ought to think about what will glorify God’ when making a business decision. But if we make business decisions with the primary purpose of glorifying God, those will be good decisions for stakeholders.”

Cumbee said he plans to use the case-study method in his class to help students think through ethical dilemmas, evaluate choices and then determine the best sustainable and ethical decision for a business.

“What honors God,” he concluded, “should be at the center of every decision.”

Founded in 1998, Williamson College is a non-profit organization that serves students of all ages, including non-traditional students and older or returning college students. Classes are usually held one evening a week and one class at a time. Williamson College is not related to a denomination and is guided by an eleven-member board of trustees. For more information, visit www.williamsoncc.edu.