Dr. Thelma B. Culver embodied the spirit of Northwest Nazarene College. She rejected a scholarship from prestigious Asbury College in order to attend NNC, a little-known school in the sagebrush. Little did she realize that one day she would become Academic Dean and play a major role in establishing the college as a sound academic institution.

She began her teaching career in the public schools of South Dakota, her birthplace, and Idaho. In 1935 she became a critic teacher at NNC’s College High School, and in 1941 she became school principal. She was named as Associate Professor of Education and Director of Student Teaching in 1942; in 1946 became the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts. In 1970 she was named Academic Dean Emerita.

Dean Culver’s honors are too numerous to enumerate. She was active in public education throughout Idaho and the Northwest, and her studies abroad brought her in contact with many leaders in education. She was offered lucrative, esteemed positions by such schools as The College of William and Mary, the University of Colorado, and others. All of these offers she refused; her heart was at NNC.

Always eager to learn, Dean Culver spent her summers in study. She was one of 45 educators chosen through personal interviews to represent the U.S. at the International Institute of Education held in Europe in 1957. In other years she attended sessions at the East-West Center at the University of Hawaii, the Intercontinental Campus Educational Series at Sophia University in Tokyo, Japan; Stanford University and others. She also participated in Cultural World Field Trips including studies in Japan, Hong Kong, Baghdad, Iraq, Baalbeck and Biblus in Lebanon, Damascus, Jordan, Jerusalem, and Rome. She also established and was chairman of the Division of Non-Western Studies at NNC.

Dr. Culver was a dedicated Christian and a member of College Church of the Nazarene where she served as secretary of the Board for many years. In 1968 she was awarded a Certificate of Merit and Medallion at the Quadrennial Conference of the Department of Education of the Church in Kansas City, Missouri.

Criteria for the Award

1. Scholarship and financial need shall be factors to be considered in making awards.
2. Preference shall be given to students preparing for a career in teaching.
3. Nominations shall be made to the Scholarship Committee by the Department of Teacher Education.
4. A minimum 2.5 GPA is required.