

2015

## The Best of Times to be a Christian College - Our Educational Mission for the Common Good

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Sharpening Intellect | Deepening Christian Faith | Inspiring Action

Messiah University is a Christian university of the liberal and applied arts and sciences. Our mission is to educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership and reconciliation in church and society. This content is freely provided to promote scholarship for personal study and not-for-profit educational use.



2015 State of the College  
**The Best of Times to be a Christian College**  
*Our Educational Mission for the Common Good*

Welcome to Community Day 2015! Today, we gather to worship and celebrate the launch of a new academic year. I am thankful for each one of you and your contribution to make this the best of times for Messiah College.

When we think of the nature of the phrase best of times, Charles Dickens' famous lines quickly come to mind:

*"It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. . . ."*

Honored as one of the 100 best opening lines by the American Book Review, these simple phrases from *A Tale of Two Cities* have etched themselves into our collective consciousness.<sup>i</sup> While we are not engaged in the type of epic struggle experienced by Dickens' characters, we can relate to the concept that the best of times often coincide with the most difficult or frustrating.

Some of us might even use this antithetical phrase to describe the experience of raising children. For Kelly and me, parenting our only child has certainly encompassed the most rewarding moments of our lives, and some of the most humbling ones as well. Loving our children (whether as parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles or mentors) is a gift, and teaching them is a privilege, but sometimes the education doesn't go exactly as planned. For example, when Brooke was four years old, she began to smuggle home small toys from her preschool classroom, and we initiated serious conversations to impress on her the concept that stealing was wrong. Then one day, when she and her father were shopping, he witnessed her slyly slipping a Chewbacca Star Wars figure into her pocket. He swiftly addressed the action with a stern response and threat of punishment. Brooke immediately dissolved into tears and quickly promised that she was so very sorry and would never steal again. Feeling quite proud of his parental success, Kelly was keenly disappointed when, moments later as they walked out into the parking lot—Princess Leia, Luke Skywalker and Han Solo came tumbling out of Brooke's pant leg. Oh yes, parenting and teaching a preschooler, or a child of any age, can simultaneously be "The best of times" – and also "the most exasperating."

On a more serious note, I want to suggest that this can be the best of times for Messiah College—even though formidable factors and a rapidly changing external context might suggest otherwise for higher education in general and for Christian colleges in particular. I have been contemplating this conclusion since last winter when two keynote speakers addressed this topic at separate gatherings for college presidents.

Mark Labberton, president of Fuller Theological Seminary, presented the provocative idea that *"This is the best of times for following Jesus."* In a related article, he argued that *"If you look at the New Testament and ask 'What is the church?' . . . [it's] people living their lives as an act of worship and response to Jesus Christ and seeking to live as daily disciples in community and for the sake of their world."*<sup>ii</sup> In his speech, however, he also described an increasing sense of exile for the church as our society experiences *"A shift from a time in which many of our institutions were surrounded by a well-formed, intentional Christendom that is now largely cracking and eroding."*<sup>iii</sup> But Labberton argues that this degree of exile is actually a gift, *"an opportunity to be re-attuned to the one we're claiming is the Savior and Lord of our lives, and that calls for a new way of living."*<sup>iv</sup>

On another occasion, Thomas Kepple, president emeritus of Juniata College, made the equally bold claim that this is the best time to be in higher education. As evidence, he cited the well-documented, positive benefits of a return to a collegiate emphasis on engaged teaching. He also pointed to the affirmation of the private college educational paradigm, a model whose deep personal engagement continues to offer value that cannot be equaled by the impersonality of massive online courses or by for-profit universities.<sup>v</sup> As one dramatic example, the for-profit University of Phoenix recently reported a 54-percent decline in enrollment.<sup>vi</sup>

As I reflected on the comments of these two presidential colleagues, I became increasingly convinced that indeed this can be the best of times for Messiah College, even as we negotiate complex challenges. First, it's the best time to incarnate our mission and to demonstrate what we have to offer the church and society. Second, it's the best time to celebrate our accomplishments as a Christian college dedicated to educational excellence. And third, it's the best time to aspire and plan toward a promising future as we prepare our students to serve, lead and reconcile in an increasingly pluralistic, fragmented and technologically charged world. Today, as we consider these themes, Pulitzer Prize-winning commentator and humorist Art Buchwald's words are particularly relevant: "*Whether it's the best of times or the worst of times, it's the only time we've got.*"<sup>vii</sup> And, similarly, I would suggest that as Christians, we need to respond to Jesus' call in "the only time we've got"—this very present moment!

This can be the best of times for Messiah College precisely because our current external environment calls for us to renew our commitment to living out our institutional mission. Our distinctive Christian heritage prepares us to honor our theological roots, while simultaneously recognizing the blessing of the many Christian traditions that comprise our community. At a seminal time such as this, we cannot rely on autopilot faith or casual Christianity as we incarnate our foundational beliefs and practices.

We are living through a paradigm shift to what many term a "post-Christendom" era in the sense that Christianity no longer holds a highly respected, central place in our nation's public life or discourse. A recent Pew Research Center study indicated a decline among Americans who affiliate with Christianity—most notably among mainline and Roman Catholic traditions—while also identifying a marked increase in unaffiliated respondents and those from non-Christian faiths. But, the study also determined that 70 percent of the U.S. population still affiliates as Christian.<sup>viii</sup> What's particularly noteworthy for Messiah College is that evangelical Protestant traditions—the ones from which we continue to draw the majority of our students—remained relatively stable as the top religious affiliation (25 percent).<sup>ix</sup> As our culture changes, we need to remember that often the church thrives when it's not in a dominant societal position. The historical example of Jesus was not *domination*, but rather *invitation*, the way of servant leadership. The danger for the Church or a Christian college in a period of marginalization is to become defensive or choose withdrawal over positive engagement. Messiah College's missional outcomes are service, leadership and reconciliation, so we are called to prepare our students to engage society where it lives and to tirelessly work on behalf of the common good of all people.

We must continue to proclaim the value of Christian higher education rooted in the liberal and applied arts and sciences for undergraduate and graduate students. At Messiah, we exemplify what Christian higher education offers to our broader culture in many ways—including through the assessment of student learning outcomes. Thoughtfully designed assessment approaches enable us to evaluate and adjust teaching and mentoring to verify that our

students master college-wide educational objectives before they graduate. We have good news to report about both in-class and out-of-class learning. Take a look at one sampling of outcomes from the past academic year.

Of course, our students and alumni are the best ambassadors for the value of a Messiah College education. Lyndsay Feather, a senior biology honors student and track and field athlete, describes the way faith development deepened her educational experience.

*Video here of Lyndsay Feather*

Lyndsay and thousands of Messiah students and alumni are actively working for the common good on a daily basis.

As a community dedicated to education within a Christian framework, we trace our lineage to rich spiritual traditions that value faith, prayer, meditation and the study of Scriptures. Our educational approach offers a refreshing alternative to the cynicism, superficiality and fragmentation that often permeate academic discourse. In a National Review article, David Coleman, the president of the College Board, made a compelling case that Christian higher education can provide the academy with a much-needed model for academic rigor.<sup>x</sup> After spending time at our peer institution Wheaton College, Coleman wrote:

*I wonder whether communities of faith might offer models for fostering academic excellence, by nourishing it with such things as meditative daily practice and a sense of reverence when reading.*<sup>xi</sup>

At Messiah College, we offer an education that empowers students to practice discernment and to seek “deep knowledge” for the greater good.

At a recent Council for Christian Colleges and Universities board meeting, member presidents affirmed the many tangible contributions our institutions make to our nation by preparing graduates who:

- live for a purpose greater than themselves;
- display a nuanced understanding of faith and ethics in their professional and personal lives;
- serve actively in their communities and invest most generously in charities;
- demonstrate responsibility, paying back their debts at the highest rates of all college graduates.

These are outcomes we need to celebrate and communicate!

In his recent book “The Road to Character,” author David Brooks argues that our nation benefits when citizens develop a strong spiritual vocabulary of virtue. His research concluded that most people of character—even if they did not affiliate with religious faith— had a deep understanding of “categories like sin, redemption, the soul, virtue, and grace.”<sup>xii</sup> In a Christianity Today interview, Brooks spoke of the transformative power of the Christian faith:

*The Gospels brought about a revolution in morals. To put it broadly, there was a shift from a desire for power to a desire for sacrificial love. Even just speaking as a historian of ideas, culture, and behavior, that was a radical revolution that created a radical counterculture.*<sup>xiii</sup>

Higher education opinion leaders are also espousing the value of an education steeped in the intellectual virtues. A recent Chronicle of Higher Education article suggested that instead of

measuring the quality of a college education based solely on graduates' income levels, we should consider the caliber of the intellectual virtues graduates develop—such as “love of truth, honesty, fair-mindedness, humility, perseverance, courage, good listening, perspective-taking and empathy.”<sup>xiv</sup> At Messiah College, we receive consistent feedback that our students and graduates bring these distinctive virtues to their vocations as described here by Travis Peck, principal of Harrisburg's Downey Elementary School.

*Video here of Travis Peck*

Messiah College works closely with Downey Elementary School as part of the White House sponsored Together For Tomorrow initiative.

In this initiative and many others, Messiah College is well-positioned to practice the deep listening and hospitality that promote the common good. Deep listening goes beyond mere information acquisition to empathic understanding—the type of listening in which we seek to step outside of our long-held assumptions for the sake of authentic learning. Last winter, NPR's Michele Norris spoke of the importance of listening during her keynote address at the School of Humanities Symposium entitled “Race in America.” She said: “*It is so easy to find a media diet that confirms what you believe. Seek a different perspective . . . there is courage in listening.*”<sup>xv</sup> Rooted in humility—deep listening and hospitality are often composed of practical gestures, positive attitudes and generous actions evident in our daily lives. As employees, you offer these gifts when you seek first to listen and understand, instead of assuming the worst; when you offer your supportive presence to a struggling student; when you venture outside your comfortable friendship circle to invite a new colleague to go to lunch; when you provide a warm welcome and positive first impression for visitors through careful stewardship of facilities and grounds and the provision of delicious meals; to name just a few examples. We are privileged to share Christ-centered hospitality with others—the type of hospitality that is often devalued in a culture of expedient tweets, Facebook posts, and now, Thunderclap flash messages.

Even as we renew our commitment to the College's mission for the good of the church and the common good of society, we can rejoice in the fact that many accomplishments of the past academic year demonstrate our continuing ability to deliver on the promise of our mission. In the midst of higher education's changing landscape, we celebrate a continuing demand for a Messiah College undergraduate and graduate education. This fall, approximately 700 first-year students will join our community, 25 more than our budgeted goal of 675 students. We also welcome 88 transfer students—103 percent of our goal. This fall's retention rate for first-year sophomore student is 88-89%, the highest in ten years! I am grateful for the efforts of all of you who worked so diligently to enroll and retain our students. As you know, our enrollment efforts will not become easier in the years ahead. The overall trend for Pennsylvania and most of the Northeast is a “slowing production” of high school graduates through 2030.<sup>xvi</sup> In addition, the most consistent trend for enrolling students is the need for increased financial aid thereby limiting our institution's net tuition revenue. With this in mind, we need to persevere in our work to prioritize recruitment and retention and to establish realistic enrollment and net tuition revenue goals. We also need to be cognizant of the changing demographic composition of high school graduates as illustrated by this chart. As we develop our new institutional strategic plan and implement the action steps of our campus diversity plan, we also prepare to embrace an increasingly diverse student population.

In graduate programs, Messiah College concluded another record-breaking year by registering 592 students who enrolled in more than 7,000 credit hours in FY15—an increase of approximately 30 percent as compared to FY14. Overall, we achieved 108 percent of our budgeted goal—a significant accomplishment!

I do want to emphasize how important effective retention of students is to our overall enrollment strategy. The College's Student Retention Team, chaired by Jim Sotherden is leading our institutional effort to ensure that our students have the necessary support to be successful. Recently, we have focused specific attention on increasing first-generation student retention. Like many of you, I was a first-generation college student, so this topic takes on a personal sense of responsibility for me. My grandparents immigrated to the United States (NYC) to work in domestic service and hourly jobs. Neither of my parents graduated from high school. They did not always understand their book-loving daughter, but they encouraged my love of learning, even though they were unable to offer much educational counsel during my college experience. Approximately 15 percent of current Messiah students are in similar situations. To assist our first generation students, we have implemented new initiatives including academic coaching, peer mentoring and an early alert system. From 2011-2013, our retention rate for first-generation students increased by 11% — a wonderful testimony to this community's care for our students.

In addition to realizing positive strides in recruitment and retention, we celebrate achievements in developing high-caliber educational programs designed to meet student and societal needs. Our College Ministries team helps to set the tone for an excellent education offered within a vibrant faith community. The new chapel program encourages worship, contemplation and reflective reading. In discussing this approach, College Pastor Don Opitz hopes students will come to view chapel participation as an educational opportunity. From an array of programming, students will be able to select Christian formation experiences that include congregational worship times, cognitive studies of the Christian faith's implications for life and culture, and educator-led Bible and book studies. When I consider our mission to educate students toward maturity of intellect, character and Christian faith, I think of the transformation that happens in the lives of students like Jeremy Tan, a junior international business major from Kuala Lumpur.

*Jeremy Tan video here*

Messiah College also promotes academic excellence through our recently established Teaching and Learning Center. Amy Ginck, senior lecturer in Spanish, and a Center fellow, says, *"I believe that a Messiah College distinctive is the excellent classroom teaching and passion of our educators. Students feel that they matter. They are supported, challenged and encouraged."* In her role as a fellow, Amy co-facilitates programs such as an inaugural two-day teaching seminar for new faculty and Teaching Tuesdays, weekly opportunities for educators to discuss different pedagogical approaches to enhance student learning. In traditional and online courses, Professor Ginck engages students' interest through effective use of technology. For one project, students post photos to VoiceThread and write accompanying narratives in Spanish. Here is a brief example of a resulting virtual conversation about the sport of fishing with family members.

*Insert Amy Ginck Voice Thread Slide 5 here (with audio)*

This year we celebrate the full implementation of an important distinctive of academic excellence at Messiah—the Experiential Learning Initiative. The ELI enables students to acquire and apply knowledge in preparation for their careers, service commitments and graduate studies. All Messiah students are required to participate in a mentored experiential learning process that culminates in the production of a ‘deliverable,’ such as a résumé, ePortfolio or website. Emma Cartisano, a biopsychology graduate and a participant in last year’s pilot program, reflected on her experience:

*I am convinced that the ELI pilot program is what made my senior research one of my most meaningful and rich experiences. I grew closer to my adviser, learned how to be an effective leader, developed myself academically, professionally and socially, and affirmed my plans for the future.*

Scott Heintzelman, an alumnus and member of the Messiah College Board of Trustees, describes the importance of experiential learning and the value Messiah alumni bring to the workplace.

*Scott H. video*

Academic quality is intricately woven throughout our undergraduate program, which marked many achievements this past academic year, including:

- The QuEST (general education) program strengthened its curriculum by enhancing the yearlong writing program for first-year students.
- The Center for Public Humanities Student Fellows participated in the community project, Poetry in Place, which helped Harrisburg public school students and residents connect to the cultural, historical and ecological roots of the region.
- Through departmental tracking, we have learned that this year’s nursing graduates more than achieved the necessary first-time NCLEX pass rate. Unofficially, our pass rate is in the mid to high 90s!
- The Department of Theatre and Dance won three merit awards from the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival for last February’s production of *Hot Mikado*.
- Messiah College hosted its first Impact Venture Challenge, a business plan competition modeled after “Shark Tank.” The competition which will be continuing entrepreneurship that combines profitability with concern for the common good. More than 450 people attended the final round of competition.
- The Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry received prestigious approval by the American Chemical Society enabling students who follow specific degree paths to obtain ACS-certified degrees.

Complementing strong undergraduate programs are quality graduate programs designed to meet the pressing needs of our nation, including the increasing demand for allied health practitioners. This year, we’re delighted to welcome Darlene Perez-Brown, director of Messiah College’s graduate occupational therapy program, which is slated to begin enrolling students in fall 2017. Dr. Perez-Brown, who is guiding the program development and facility renovation, describes the program’s vision:

*Messiah College will prepare not only highly qualified clinicians but also caring therapists who demonstrate Christian values and Christian character, genuine concern for the needs of others and the passion to equip people with the skills they need to live meaningful lives.*

Even as we celebrate the strength of our academic programs, we acknowledge that we can only attain the fullness of educational excellence by preparing students and ourselves for an increasingly diverse world. Our institutional commitment to inclusive excellence comprises salient compositional, educational and campus climate goals.

In support of diversity education, the College has sponsored the participation of employee cohorts in an annual “Returning to the Roots of the Civil Rights” journey. In June, I had the privilege of joining the Messiah team on this tour. The importance of educating our students for lives of reconciliation became keenly apparent at the tour’s midpoint. We gathered to listen to the first-person accounts of two women who experienced tragic loss as a result of the 1963 bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Birmingham that killed four young girls. The first speaker described being present in the church on that fateful day—and how she personally suffered from the physical trauma of the bombing and the emotional turmoil of losing her young friends. The second speaker told of how she lost her sister and, as a result, their family life was permanently marked by paralyzing grief. Both of these women testified to the lengthy and painful journeys they have pursued toward forgiveness and reconciliation.

At precisely the same hour when we were meeting with these courageous women, a young man entered the Mother Emmanuel AME church in Charleston, and murdered nine people. Hatred and racism are a horrible truth of the American story—and we cannot allow these pathologies to flourish. But, what is also evident from the Emmanuel AME Church’s response is *that God is with us* in the midst of our brokenness and divine love can help us overcome the tentacles of hate that ensnare us. We can learn so much from the example of the Rev. Clementa Pinckney and his parishioners who hospitably welcomed a stranger into their Bible study and the remarkable example of their families who, in the midst of overwhelming grief, expressed forgiveness to the murderer.

The Civil Rights journey encourages participants to confront the wounds of racism, the personal biases we all possess, and the disturbing truth of the privileges afforded some citizens and not others. This painful understanding is foundational to the pursuit of reconciliation—one of Messiah College’s three missional outcomes. We must educate our students and ourselves to be active participants in the ministry of reconciliation in Church and society.

Educational excellence entails not only quality undergraduate, graduate, chapel and diversity education programs, but also the provision of physical spaces to support educational programming and community life. Toward that end, we are moving forward with the construction of several new campus facility additions. A benefactor-funded addition to Lottie Nelson Dining Room will increase seating capacity by 200, improving the student dining experience and also serving as a welcoming special event venue.

Advancing our goal of student wellness, in late spring 2016, we intend to initiate construction of a new fitness center to coincide with much-needed improvements to indoor athletic and recreational facilities in Eisenhower and Sollenberger Sports Center. Renovations include the construction of an additional gymnasium, the transformation of Hitchcock Arena into our primary basketball venue and the renovation of locker rooms. Collectively, these new spaces will support student wellness, provide essential facilities for our outstanding athletic programs and bolster our student recruitment efforts in a competitive environment. This project is being



funded by a combination of fundraising and borrowing. Currently, we have 77 percent of the pledges and gifts we need to raise, and we expect to complete fundraising by May 2016.

The forethought invested prior to constructing these new facilities is evidence of the intentional planning we undertake to assure the continued flourishing of our College. Indeed, I believe it can be the best of times for Messiah College to aspire and plan toward a promising future of preparing our students to serve, lead and reconcile in an increasingly pluralistic, fragmented and technology-charged world. In all our pursuits, we continue to be guided by our 2020 vision to “be the first choice among undergraduate and graduate students who desire a Christian higher education.”

Even as we must affirm our mission and celebrate our accomplishments, we must also carefully plan for our future. In the year ahead, we will conclude the current institutional strategic plan, finalize a new 2016–2020 plan and conduct a campus master planning process. Some of the themes emerging from the work of the institutional strategic planning committee include:

- Advancing Messiah College’s mission and identity in a changing culture;
- Engaging, enrolling and retaining a changing constituency;
- Strengthening programming and preparing personnel for a changing student body; and
- Investing resources for a solid financial future.

Do you get the sense that change is on our minds? A few possible goals related to the strategic themes include: creating deeper ties with Latino-serving churches in the mid-state region; developing pilot programs and policies for the use of hybrid or online courses for traditional and non-traditional undergraduate populations; and recruiting, retaining, developing and supporting our dedicated employees.

Because we successfully achieved many of the goals of the current strategic plan, we have attained a strong institutional financial profile. Earlier this summer, Standard & Poor’s reaffirmed the College’s financial position with a long-term “A” rating with a stable outlook and a short-term “A-1” rating. In addition, we exceeded last year’s fundraising goal by more than \$1 million dollars and created a number of new scholarship endowments. Due to effective fundraising, disciplined debt payment and conservative fiscal management, we are now in a position to borrow funds as well as fundraise to address institutional needs and priorities.

As we look to the future, an overarching issue that influences our aspirational planning is the need to live out our mission and Christian convictions in challenging times. Christians and Christian institutions have always had to determine how to balance and negotiate their convictions with the values and expectations of the culture in which they are embedded. Today, we are certainly in the midst of such a season, particularly as we face external pressures which could limit the College’s institutional autonomy and the ability to define our institutional mission, values and related codes of conduct including our commitment to the Church’s historic understanding of Christian marriage. While we must develop appropriate responses to these challenges, our vocation as a Christian college is not to lead a culture war. Rather, our vocation is to educate our students in an environment characterized by academic rigor, spiritual vitality and compassionate care. As we endeavor to be this faithful presence, I’m grateful that we are part of a larger body of faith-related educational institutions that are seeking to maintain the freedom to fulfill our missions within our nation’s mosaic of principled pluralism. The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities is working with the Interfaith Religious Alliance and other

universities, including an alliance of Catholic institutions, to articulate the case for religious freedom of faith-based colleges. Principled pluralism calls for our nation to value multiple voices and opinions including those of religious persons. But, our conversations and debates must be characterized by humility and grace, not stridency.

Be assured that I am engaging our board of trustees—who bear the responsibility for defining and nurturing the College’s mission and identity—in serious and sustained assessment of these challenges as we analyze potential difficulties that will require responses. Later this fall, Provost Randall Basinger and I will host an informal coffee and conversation time for employees to ask questions regarding the College’s advocacy for institutional autonomy and religious freedom. In addition, the provost and I will continue leading employee educational sessions about the College’s perspective on human sexuality. My fervent hope and prayer is that Messiah College will serve as a positive example of a faith-based college that embodies humility and deep listening and compassion in the midst of divisive debates within the church and our nation.

The tone and tenor we bring to all of our difficult conversations—whether in national or regional contexts or on our own campus—must be marked by kindness. We need to cultivate a culture of mutual respect in every aspect of our work together. Last spring, we experienced several campus incidents of disrespect related to race, gender and perceived status—incidents that were unacceptable and painful for employees and students. We need to honor one another as part of our personal Christian identities and as part of the educational responsibility we assume for our students. While we should be mindful of this at all times, we need to make a special effort to be understanding of one another during stressful, busy times and extend extra grace during major admissions events, Service Day and Commencement when the presence of a large number of campus guests may cause traffic and parking complications. We will only be able to approach difficult conversations about serious and issues if we master the art of extending kindness and respect in daily interactions.

### **Call to Action**

So, this morning, let us approach the new academic year with personal and corporate commitments to:

- Remain focused on our mission and institutional priorities;
- Renew our thinking—by holding to the promise to “See Anew.” When disagreements develop, let’s invite Christ’s love and presence into our midst as we practice deep listening; and
- Recommit ourselves to be a loving and faithful presence on campus and in our broader spheres of influence.

### **Conclusion**

This can be the best of times for Messiah College because of the value of our mission to the Church and society; because of our communal and educational achievements; and because our institutional vitality enables us to plan for a hopeful future. As a Christ-centered educational community, we see the world and even time itself with renewed vision. We have a hope that’s secure, a joy that’s not tethered to circumstances, and an assurance that surpasses the boundaries of time, no matter what may come!

We are not limited by a linear, chronological understanding of time. Rather, we understand that we are invited into God’s “best time” of Kairos, God’s time beyond time, where

His purposes are fulfilled. This view of God's sovereignty can transform our perspective of whatever we may encounter in our chronologically ordered lives. Seeing anew, in this way, can transform our lives so that we might transform our students.

Author Madeleine L'Engle beautifully describes Kairos as:

*That time which breaks through chronos with a shock of joy. . . The saint in contemplation, lost (discovered) to self in the mind of God is in kairos. The artist at work is in kairos. The child at play . . . is in kairos. In kairos we become what we are called to be as human beings, co-creators with God, touching on the wonder of creation.<sup>xvii</sup>*

This morning, in a spirit of gratitude and hope, and with expectant hearts, may we be open to the best of God's time in this present moment as we labor together to educate our students toward a deeper understanding of the wonder of creation and the majesty of God!

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## Endnotes

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- <sup>i</sup> "100 Best First Lines from Novels," American Book Review, accessed August 20, 2015, <http://americanbookreview.org/100bestlines.asp>.
- <sup>ii</sup> Mark Labberton, "This Is the Best of Times for Following Jesus," ChristianityToday.com, October 30, 2014, Interview.
- <sup>iii</sup> Mark Labberton, "Leadership of Another Kind," *CCCU Advance*, Spring 2015, 31.
- <sup>iv</sup> Labberton, "This is the Best of Times."
- <sup>v</sup> Thomas R. Kepple, Jr., "Acceptance Speech" (AICUP 2015 Awards Dinner, Hershey Hotel, Hershey, Pa., March 23, 2015).
- <sup>vi</sup> Samantha Allen, "Death of a Diploma Mill," The Daily Beast, July 31, 2015.
- <sup>vii</sup> Kyra Phillips, anchor, "Art Buchwald Celebrates His Life," in *CNN Newsroom*, transcript, CNN, November 2, 2006.
- <sup>viii</sup> Alan Cooperman, ed., *America's Changing Religious Landscape: Pew Research Center*, Demographic Study, May 12, 2015.
- <sup>ix</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>x</sup> David Coleman, "No, Wheaton College's Accreditation Should Not Be Revoked," National Review Online, July 14, 30.
- <sup>xi</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>xii</sup> "David Brooks: We Need to Start Talking about Sin and Righteousness Again." Interview by Jeff Haanen. ChristianityToday.com, May 13, 2015.
- <sup>xiii</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>xiv</sup> Barry Schwartz, "What 'Learning How to Think' Really Means," The Chronicle of Higher Education, online, June 18, 2015.
- <sup>xv</sup> As quoted by Ashlyn Miller, "NPR's Michele Norris Encourages 'Seeking Different Perspectives' in Keynote Symposium Address on Race," *The Swinging Bridge*, online (Mechanicsburg, PA), February 27, 2015, accessed August 20, 2015.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Brian T. Prescott and Peace Bransberger, *Knocking at the College Door: Projection of High School Graduates*, report, 8th ed. (Bolder, CO: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2012), xii.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Madeleine L'Engle, *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith & Art* (Wheaton, IL: H. Shaw, 1980), 98.