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John Brown Letter to the Lindenwood Board of Directors, October 24, 1967

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REPORT OF JOHN ANTHONY BROWN, PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE,
TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND ADVISORY BOARD
OF LINDENWOOD COLLEGE
OCTOBER 24, 1967

At the end of a full year in office I am pleased to report to the Board on the condition of the college and the efforts we are making to relate the college to the world in which it functions.

The newspapers have made it abundantly clear that the private colleges face serious problems of adjustment. Some of the statements made this fall about private colleges have been extreme, designed to shock the friends of private education out of their lethargy. The President of the Ford Foundation led the field in this matter of urgent outcry; I quote from the New York Times, October 13, 1967:

"The president of the Ford Foundation said today that the nation's colleges and universities had failed to convince the public of their 'imminent bankruptcy' and would succeed only if they met a 'new requirement of candor.'

"McGeorge Bundy, the foundation's president, told 1,700 leaders of higher education that 'you and I may know in our bones that the needs of our colleges are more urgent than ever; we may even know from our balance sheets that the deficits predicted so long are now becoming a brutal reality.'

"But, 'as a whole, and to the country as a whole,' he added, 'we have not made our case.'"

Headlines are often misleading. The "bankruptcy" Mr. Bundy suggests can be averted, he believes, by a new level of candor and honesty in the academic community. Your president heard Mr. Bundy's speech and agrees with him that the time has come for a new kind of reporting, particularly to Boards of Trustees, for a new candor, particularly to prospective donors, and a new realization that good collegiate education can only be financed by a combination of many sources of support, both public and private.

In the mood of candor that should prevail may I report to this Board first about our academic situation at Lindenwood, then our physical problems, and finally, not because it is least but because it supports our academic and physical growth, our finances.

We have had a year of intensive planning and are underway with a significantly revised academic program. The program has been carefully defined and described in our new catalogue and is the result of months of careful study and constructive revision by our faculty. The first and foremost "bankruptcy" we must avoid is a bankruptcy of program. Students come to college with the highest kind of expectation; the better the high school from which they come, the higher their expectation. College is too often a straight line projection of high school; more of the same. We have seen to it that Lindenwood is not just a projection of high school.

We deal with students, and they are part of a generation that is deeply concerned about the great issues which threaten our civilization. Young women,

particularly, concern themselves with the stirring problems which affect the quality of life. Where once they wanted piano lessons, they want economics; where once they wanted dressmaking, they want History of the Far East; where once they wanted courses on social etiquette, they now enroll in courses in religion and philosophy. We have seen to it that Lindenwood meets these needs. It has meant adding new faculty in academic areas of central concern; we had only one political scientist; we had only one economist and one sociologist.

I report to you about the things that really matter. For it is the quality of our academic life which must be measured and evaluated, and always put first.

We have applied resources to this problem: eight new faculty positions were established. Two positions were dropped. No major is now offered in a department with only one faculty member. We could not reassign people in fields of low demand; at considerable cost we acted to give our students a full academic program in the liberal arts. These new people are bringing life and vitality to the college.

Our faculty is paid at a scale which gives us the right to be proud. But we must maintain this level if we are to attract top-level people and hold them. No good college, rated well in academic circles, is at a lower scale. It will be necessary to reduce the size of our faculty somewhat by a very careful analysis, and I have asked Mr. Skinner, of the Faculty and Curriculum Committee, to work with the administration in an analysis of the problem. Tenure policy is involved, and we must deal with the problem in ways acceptable to the academic community.

There is a fact of academic life with which we must always live. The level of an academic program at a college must be related to the academic achievement and aptitude levels of its students. We reviewed the statistics on student input at the Board meeting last spring; the Board endorsed our new policy. Where did it leave us when enrollment was complete? I have distributed a profile of our Freshman Class. It reflects a gain of some sixty to seventy points in the College Entrance Examination Board's Standard Aptitude Test in one year. The Freshman Class this year is capable of college work; the level is respectable but not high. We are where we were before we softened our standards to fill McCluer and Parker. The most positive and exciting factor is the percentage of students admitted who actually enrolled at Lindenwood who were in the top fifth of their high school class. We enrolled nearly seventy percent of the top students we admitted; our previous experience has been something less than half that percentage over the past four years.

Our freshman class is comprised of 165 students; we are proud of them and we will be prouder if the new program brings us more like them next year. We intend to hold at our present academic level and hope to enroll at least 200 freshmen in September, 1968.

I move now to physical problems. Candor demands that I admit to this Board that we are possessed of residence facilities we cannot fill with students. This has happened before. Dr. McCluer had residence halls closed even before we built McCluer and Parker. While we were building McCluer and Parker halls, we were, I believe, neglecting Niccolls Hall, particularly in the upper levels where lighting, bath facilities and heating were far less than desirable. And while we were building these two new residence halls, we were actively engaged with a field staff as high as seven recruiting students at lower standards. On

top of this effort, we did not seem to be aware that a decrease in the college age population would affect us in 1967, 1968, 1969; and 1970. It will be 1971 before there are again as many students as in 1965. And by that time, public colleges and universities will have at least doubled their residence capacity from the 1960 figure.

The problem of residence hall space is compounded at Lindenwood by several very uneconomic units. Ayres has a capacity of 57; Butler houses 53; Sibley is costly to maintain with a capacity of 67. We are currently studying new ways to control and service these units and we could, by careful management, operate at a level of 700 students without Niccolls.

While we have this excess housing capacity, we have still with us the pressing need for a College Center. In terms of location and adaptability Niccolls Hall would seem to be a perfect solution; we could convert the lower two levels to the College Union function and the upper two levels to a refurbished residence hall with a separate entrance.

The Buildings and Grounds Committee has studied this problem; consultants have reported and our architects now are ready with figures. I am disappointed with the cost factors and will ask for the privilege of expressing my views when the Committee report is made. But here and now I go on record: our students deserve and must have the basic facilities described in the program we gave the architects.

The physical plant is also inadequate for art instruction. The Board previously authorized us to proceed with planning and financing a Fine Arts Building. Sketches and floor plans have been brought before you. Our application for a grant has been approved in the amount of \$370,198; our application for a loan is caught in the current freeze in Washington, but we expect approval later this year. We ought to proceed, and to avoid delay I request approval from the Board to submit the final plans, which have been completed by Mr. Wischmeyer, for review by the Office of Education so that this step can be out of the way by the time the loan is made.

We have invested in new lights on the campus; they improve our situation but do not adequately light the campus at night. We will budget this item again for 1968-69; we have installed an information booth and control center at the front gate to eliminate the unpleasant invasions of our campus by undesirable elements. It costs us over \$12,000 a year as currently planned but it has worked well in the few weeks it has been in operation.

The library addition rises on schedule and is very much needed. Library usage has increased nearly 300% under the stimulation of the new program.

Studies for new walls and altered entrance gates are underway; President Black will report on our negotiations with the Highway Department, and I encourage you to endorse his recommendation that we use our funds from the State to provide better security for the campus.

Finally, finances. The changes we have brought about, and those occasioned by the reduced student market, have led to a deficit budget. The administration has projected a budget ahead for the 1968-69 year, and we believe that we can regain a truly balanced budget by the 1969-70 fiscal year. But here, as elsewhere, a good college must have generous gift and grant support. Here, as elsewhere, we

must receive foundation and government grants. The budget you will be asked to approve today reflects the hope that we can increase our gifts and grants this year over last, for operating expenses, by something like \$70,000. It has a deficit beyond this of \$150,000. We will have to borrow this, with our own resources as collateral. I am no happier than the Finance Committee about this; I am no less aware than they that such deficits cannot be indefinitely sustained. During the present period of transition for our college, and in a period of great challenge to all independent liberal arts colleges, we need not panic at this deficit. We rather should help reduce it, and I pledge my full efforts to that end.

But here, with finances, if candor is to truly mark this report, I must not stop. As your President, I need more help than a Board of 15 and an Advisory Board of 5 can give. If we put first things first in the months ahead, we will broaden and strengthen this Board. Mr. Black has begun to work on this and I hope that he will be given every assistance possible. In addition, we need to take a very hard look, right now, at the problem of a coordinate men's college. With your approval I will proceed to appoint the appropriate study groups within the college, so that students, faculty and alumnae views are heard. We will bring together the necessary information from Kenyon, Hamilton, and other colleges which have gone through the spawning process and try to bring the problems involved into focus by the June Board meeting. In addition, we will study Lindenwood's potential as a woman's college both within and without a coordinate framework.

You all know that I like my role at Lindenwood. It has been a year of great effort and change; students have been very kind to me and I feel a wonderful sense of achievement. I also know that the better we are as a college, the more intense our financial needs will be; the road ahead is not well paved for any college. This is, perhaps, enough candor for the day.