

## **PRESIDENT'S NOTEBOOK NO. 10      Fall 2009**

In this issue:

- ~ *Fall Enrollments Continue to Impress*
- ~ *Retention and Graduation Rates*
- ~ *Freshman Retention Report*
- ~ *Continuation Rate for All Daytime Undergraduates*
- ~ *Lindenwood Excels on Comprehensive Graduation Ratio*
- ~ *Academic Activities are Vigorous and Rigorous*
- ~ *Harmon Hall Update*
- ~ *Request for Additional Help*
- ~ *A Holiday Wish*

### **Fall Numbers Are Strong**

#### *LU Enjoying a 3.6% Increase*

Despite the financial horror evoked by the major recession going on in the United States and elsewhere, most of the higher education sector has fared decently, with many universities – both state schools and independent institutions – reporting either steady or slightly increased fall enrollments. With the recession-induced heightened attention and activity surrounding retraining the general workforce, community colleges are experiencing an overabundance of new students presently – more than some of them can accommodate amidst constraints on the budget allocations those schools receive from their state governments. These interesting enrollment phenomena in the middle of global financial duress are the reasons that higher education is included in the group of so called recession-proof industries.

How is Lindenwood doing in the financial maelstrom? Each year we send data on many of our institutional characteristics to the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Our IPEDS data this year show a total unduplicated head count of 10,453 students for the fall terms (only). Last fall our IPEDS head count was 10,085. In other words, we are enjoying a 3.6% increase in student numbers relative to last year. Some particulars might be of interest:

- Summer-quarter enrollment was 16% higher than in 2008.

- Fall-quarter enrollment is 3.6% higher this year.
- Our fall residential population exceeded 3800, which represents fair growth relative to the residential count of 3650 in fall of 2008.
- The total head count for daytime undergraduates is 4492, which compares well with the count of 4343 in fall of 2008.

Our measured student-population growth from year to year enables us to keep tuition increases minimal (2.2% on average across the last seven years) while remaining debtless. The tuition rate change for 2010-11 will again be sparing.

Our healthy student census is a result of the essential assistance you give us in identifying prospective students. Please continue to send us those leads!

Lindenwood's enviable condition is also due in part to the greatly improved student-retention initiatives that we have put into place over the past two and one-half years. I will describe some results of those programs and efforts in this edition of *Notebook*.

## **Facts about Retention and Graduation Rates**

### *Executive Team Refines Assessment Tools*

As a part of the report we filed with the Higher Learning Commission last summer, we reviewed and analyzed the status of our retention and graduation rates. We did this assessment by comparing Lindenwood's present student-persistence data not only to our past performance in this arena but also to the statistics of other four-year universities in Missouri.

### **Freshman Retention**

A colossal amount of attention and weight is assigned to the percent of first-year students who enroll in the same university in the fall of their sophomore year. That percent is the "Freshman Retention Rate." This index of student persistence is out of

step with modern higher education because the typical college student is no longer an 18-23 year old who falls hopelessly in love with his first-time university and sails inexorably forward for a perfect landing on the commencement dais of that school about four years later. The typical student at Lindenwood, for example, is a 30-year-old female transfer student with children and a full-time job, who takes night classes, and plans to finish her bachelor's or graduate degree sometime in the next three to five years – depending on what happens in her life this year and next. This genre of degree candidate is becoming the norm not only here but nationwide. For that reason, we need to develop measures of student continuation and success that are based on all of the more diverse student groups that populate today's academia.

*But Our Traditional Freshmen Are, in Fact, Persevering Better*

The above qualification notwithstanding, the persistence of our first-time freshman students continues to be important in its own right, both to us and to those students. Among other considerations, that segment of our student body represents the traditional “core” of the University. Further, in absolute numbers, our “millennials,” persons the generation born roughly between 1980 and 2000, remain one of our larger student contingents, and, as such, their success will always be an important part of our *raison d'être*. Accordingly, **I am pleased to report that 72 percent of last fall's freshman returned to Lindenwood this fall.** That compares well with the mid-60-percent ratio that we had averaged over the previous five years. The various retention-enhancement efforts that we recently aimed at traditional-age college students appear to be having the intended effect.

*Academic Aptitude and Freshman Retention*

We did an extensive investigation of the factors correlated with student persistence, and our major discovery might offend the beliefs of higher-education idealists: A powerful predictor of freshman retention variation among schools is the institution's mean ACT Composite Score, which explains up to 80% of differences among colleges and

universities in the St. Louis area. Based on that correlation and the data available from the U.S. Department of Education, we developed a statistical prediction model that generates a scientific scale of first-year retention expectations. Lindenwood's expected freshman retention rate is about two-thirds (66 percent). Along with 12 other independent four-year institutions in the state, this University's actual first-year retention ratio [of 72 percent] exceeds the predicted level by a healthy margin – a very good indication indeed! Of the 25 institutions considered in our investigation, only four others outpaced their predicted ratios by as much as Lindenwood.

The average freshman continuation ratio for Missouri's independent universities is 71 percent.

#### *It Helps to Engage Our Students*

You might be interested to know that 76 percent our first-year student-athletes return for their sophomore year (again, compared with 72 percent overall for freshmen), which illustrates how important it is to engage students with the campus. How might we connect better with our non-athletes? (That is a challenge question for all of us. I have no simple answer because there is none. Student engagement requires the ongoing multifaceted ingenuity of the whole campus community.) I welcome your ideas and suggestions with complete faith that together we can tackle this opportunity to further help our students succeed.

#### *Evidence-Based Model for Evaluating Freshman Retention*

Our work with US Department of Education (USDE) data has enabled us to develop useful and realistic benchmarks for assessing our first-year students' retention ratios, and we will continue to use those standards until changes in USDE data indicate the need for a revision of the interpretive system. The benchmarks for Lindenwood follow:

- Marginal - 55-59 percent freshman-to-sophomore continuation, which is more than a standard error below Lindenwood's evidence-based expected level. This level of retention is unacceptable.
- Fair - 60-64 percent freshman-to-sophomore continuation. This descriptor is based on empirical comparisons with other independent institutions in Missouri.
- Good - 65-69 percent freshman-to-sophomore continuation. This interval contains Lindenwood's expected rate and also represents the continuation level of many schools of comparable ACT selectivity. This range is Lindenwood's modal interval.
- Very Good - 70-74 percent freshman-to-sophomore continuation. This is above LU's expected rate but provides an excellent perennial goal toward which to strive. We are pleased that our 2009 first-year retention figure was at this level as a result of the extraordinary effort we have accorded first-to-second year persistence.
- Excellent - 75 and higher percent freshman-to-sophomore continuation. This interval represents a theoretical ideal toward which we intend to strive once Lindenwood's annual rate is consistently in the 70-74 range. This degree of first-year-student persistence has been shown to be possible on this campus under conditions of maximal student engagement, as represented by the retention ratio of our student-athletes (76 percent).

We have reached the "Very Good" level of freshman-to-sophomore continuation. Another fact is very important to note: Excepting the Fall of 2003, Lindenwood's freshman retention ratio has not been below empirically based expectations by a statistically reliable amount. However, we believe we can do better in this realm and that the additional new initiatives launched in 2007 and 2008 are already producing more desirable success patterns.

Please keep up your excellent support of our freshman. It is paying off for them and this University.

## **Fall-to-Fall Continuation Rate for All Daytime Undergraduates**

### *Impressive Increase over 2008*

Not only were our freshmen more likely to return this fall, but so were our sophomores (80 percent vs. 76 percent last year), Juniors (89 percent vs. 87 percent), and seniors (77 percent vs. 74 percent). Overall fall-to-fall retention for our day programs was 79 percent in fall of 2009, which was an impressive 5 percent jump relative to the fall 2008 figure.

## **Comprehensive Graduation Ratio: A Measure for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

### *CGR Assesses Degree Completion*

As a part of Lindenwood's recent self-study, we devised the Comprehensive Graduation Ratio (CGR) as a major tool for supplementing the conventional measures of student continuation, which bypass the majority of our students. The CGR is calculated annually by *dividing the total number of degrees awarded in a given fiscal year by the University's total unduplicated head count in the fall term of that year*. It is a *global index of the rate at which a university's students in total – traditional and nontraditional, day and evening, undergraduate and graduate, full-time and part-time – complete their degrees*. The index should get larger as a school improves the programs and services it uses to guide students toward completion of their degrees.

The Comprehensive Graduation Ratios presented in the table and figure below were computed from institutional head counts and degree counts that are gathered by the Missouri Department of Higher Education and published on the Web at <http://dhe.mo.gov/research.shtml>. The statistics provided here are the average CGRs for all four-year colleges and universities in Missouri, both independent and public (tax

supported). Having the average ratios for the whole set of schools provides an appropriate framework for interpreting Lindenwood’s performance.

Though not shown below, the following outcomes appeared in the report we recently submitted to the Higher Learning Commission:

1. The number of Lindenwood students completing their programs of study continues to grow each year, and that number topped 2,600 in 2008.
2. Lindenwood’s CGR was consistently in the upper half of Missouri’s independent colleges and universities across the years for which data are available.
3. On average, from 2005 through 2008, Lindenwood’s CGR was 23.5 percent, meaning that, institution-wide, we graduate nearly one quarter of our students in a typical year, where the student count total is defined by the official fall census that we conduct for government reporting purposes.
4. Lindenwood’s average rank is in the upper third of peer institutions.

The CGR data just came in for 2009, and they reveal that Lindenwood’s present CGR exceeds 27 percent.

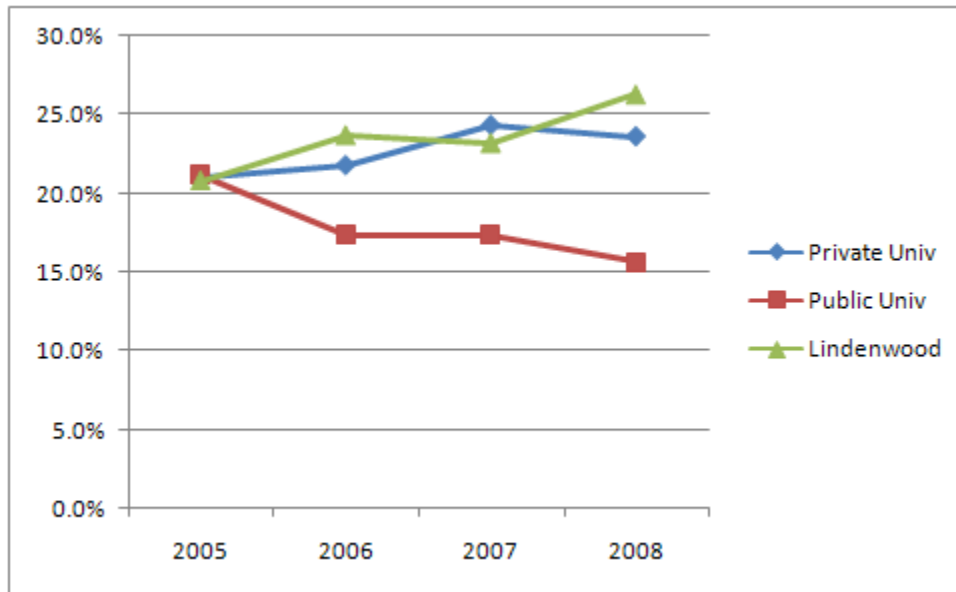
These facts support the assertion that this University is fulfilling its mission as a “public-serving liberal arts university” fairly well, to the extent that degree completion across all student sectors is viewed as an indicator of a university’s effectiveness.

***Comprehensive Graduation Ratio***

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Private Univ	21.0%	21.8%	24.3%	23.6%
Public Univ	21.2%	17.3%	17.3%	15.6%
Lindenwood	20.8%	23.7%	23.2%	26.3%

**KEY: Higher ratios are better. These are unweighted means.**

***Unweighted Mean CGR: Comparison of Private and Public Universities***



**Lindenwood’s Idea Exchange is Active**

*Convergence of New Publications and Research*

Two years ago this month, an academic model was proposed as a working blueprint for this campus community. The Republic of Ideas paradigm is not new in academe but, in my humble opinion, is among the best teaching-learning ideals in higher education, for this reason: It characterizes a university environment that not only allows the free, respectful exchange of concepts and opinions but continuously promotes that reciprocal enrichment in a variety of ways.

Enrichment via open written and oral conversations goes on daily in our excellent classes. In addition, we use many structured co-curricular initiatives to fuel intellectual



growth and contribute to the development and dissemination of knowledge. Here are but a few recent examples:

#### *Activity of the Lindenwood University Press*

*St. Louis from Village to Metropolis* is a book of readings contributed by regional scholars who focus on the development and history of the St. Louis area during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Through the effort and professional networking of Dr. Jeff Smith, one of our many distinguished Professors of History, the University realized an opportunity to partner with the State Historical Society of Missouri to produce this erudite volume.

Jeff also led the launch of *The Confluence*, one of Lindenwood's new scholarly peer-reviewed journals featuring articles on the St. Louis region. In his role as the *Journal's* chief editor, Dr. Smith assembled a rich cluster of articles for the first edition, works ranging from a piece on the history of the City's treatment of its immigrants to an article on the decline in native species along the Illinois River, which was written by Lindenwood's Dr. Paige Mettler-Cherry and her colleague, Dr. Marian Smith (SIU-E).

#### *The Intercontinental Mind*

Professors Ray Scupin, Ryan Guffey, and Joe Cernik – working with Editorial Assistants Rebecca Goulart and Cassandra Ickes – published the first edition of Lindenwood's refereed online *Journal of International and Global Studies*. In this inaugural issue, noted scholars from around the country addressed a wide range of human behavioral phenomena having powerful educational, economic, political, social, and even psychological ramifications. Did you know that cockfighting often is as much about machismo as it is about dinero?

#### *Lindenwood's Undergraduate Research Initiatives*

Other Lindenwood publications heralded the November 7 Missouri Undergraduate Psychology Conference, which was held on the Spellmann Campus Center. This

prestigious regional meeting brought in 180+ participants – advanced psychology students and their faculty advisors – from around Missouri and Western Illinois, including more than a dozen Lindenwood students and half a dozen of our faculty members. Dr. Michiko Nohara-Leclair, who played a major role in organizing this MUPC meeting, sent us the following list of Lindenwood students who submitted their work for the research competition:

Group 2 Empirical Poster Session

**Brian Judd** (presented on behalf of Brian Judd, Danielle Merli, & Jamie Zagar)

Session 1 Empirical Paper

**Mary Claire Kondro** (Tied for Second Place with Chazelle & Gravlin below)

**Channon Chazelle & Kristen Gravlin** (Tied for Second Place with Kondro above)

Session 2 Empirical Paper

**Chelsea Schumacher** (First Place)

**Gregory Townsend** (Second Place)

Session 3 Empirical Paper

**Kristy Myers** (presented on behalf of Kristy Johnson & Kristy Myers, First Place)

**Danielle Merli** (presented on behalf of Danielle Merli & Jamie Zagar, Second Place)

Session 1 Non-empirical Paper

**Krista Blankenship & Chastin Oliver** (First Place)

**Amanda Vance** (Tied for Second Place with Klimaszewski below)

**Cindy Klimaszewski** (Tied for Second Place with Vance above)

Session 2 Non-empirical Paper

**John Gatermann & Kim Gould** (First Place)

**Verenna Huerta & Taylor Morrill**

In Dr. Nohara-Leclair's words, "We certainly have some great students!"

For this kind of notable accomplishment, our Psychology faculty and students have my greatest regard and heartiest congratulations. Such a successful project certainly provides an example of how we are effectively pursuing our institutional goal of increasing the involvement of undergraduate students in comparatively sophisticated research and scholarship.

*Importance of Protecting and Promoting Academic Freedom*

These examples of the intellectual vitality of Lindenwood illustrate the exciting educational results of encouraging a range of academic pursuits on a university campus. Importantly, however, they also highlight the importance of ensuring responsible and productive academic freedom – a charge that the Lindenwood faculty, administration, and board take very seriously.

## **Harmon Hall Update**

### *Expansion Creates New Academic Homes*

Often people from both the Lindenwood family and the surrounding community ask about the timeline for the completion of our upgrade and expansion of Harmon Hall (from 30,000 square feet to 59,000 square feet of space). Here is a summary of the expected developments in that project:

- The new portion of Harmon, including the new distance-learning-equipped auditorium, will be ready for occupancy and use by the end of January, 2010 (yes, next month).
- The older side of the building will then undergo a complete facelift and upgrade during the spring semester and likely will be ready for its new residents by June.
- About half of the faculty members in the School of Business and Entrepreneurship will move from the Memorial Arts Building (MAB) to Harmon in January, and the remaining Business professors will conduct their exodus in June.

A related question is “What will become of the Memorial Arts Building?” Here is the scoop:

- The lower level of MAB will be vacated this coming January and refurbished during the spring semester. It contains a large classroom and office space for about 19 faculty members.

- The School of Human Services will move into the lower level of MAB during the summer of 2010. Some of those faculty members might also stake out some office space on the main level or upper level of the building.
- The Office of Student Services, under Dean Christie Rodgers, will occupy one side of the office wing on the main floor of MAB.
- A few faculty members from the School of Sciences will settle into the offices on the side of the hall opposite the Student Academic Services suite.
- The Center for International and Global Studies will remain in the Spellmann Campus Center, and Dr. Ray Scupin, who directs the CIGS, will be relocating to the fourth floor of the Spellmann Campus Center.
- Latzer Hall will remain a classroom, as will the other classrooms in the building.
- Goodall Parlor will remain a special meeting room.

## **Request for Recruiting Leads**

### *Progress Depends on You*

I wish to thank the large number of you who have given our Day Admissions Office some great recruiting leads for the spring semester. If you have any names and phone numbers still on your desk or in your head, please send them to Dean Joe Parisi as soon as possible. Also, please keep the University in mind if you should happen to meet any new college-ready individuals at holiday gatherings. All that our Admissions officers will need is basic contact information, and they will take care of everything else. We can remain fiscally and educationally strong only if all of us continue to assist with the discovery and matriculation of new students each term.

## **A Holiday Wish**

Lois and I send you our sincerest wishes for a memorable holiday season. Be sure to take that well-earned break, however brief it might be, and enjoy this magic season in the best spirit of happiness and optimism.

We look forward to seeing you and your spouse or guest at the University's holiday party this Saturday.

