

PRESIDENT'S NOTEBOOK NO. 19 Fall 2013

I start this edition of the *Notebook* by congratulating our magnificent University community – including each and every one of you – for the successful execution of our decennial self-study, which is the principal process through which we earn reaffirmation of our regional accreditation. Based on that self-study, the visiting team of evaluators representing the Higher Learning Commissions (HLC) completed its examination of our campuses and some of our extension sites during the week of October 28, and their immediate informal feedback, as some of you already know, was predominantly complimentary.

Although we will not receive the working draft of the HLC team's written reports for six to eight weeks, here is the gist of some observations the team members made during their exit session with Dr. Weitzel, Dr. Bladdick, and me:

- The team was very impressed with the University, its physical plant, its programs, the progress made over the past several years, but especially its people.
- The group recognized a great commitment to and passion about Lindenwood on the part of students, faculty, staff, administration, and board.

- The team chair noted that the team had a favorable picture of what has happened in the past two decades, but particularly praised our improvements and progress since the last comprehensive review.
- Some of the things they liked included the following:
 - Our work in the area of student retention
 - The fact that we always give priority to the education of students when making decisions
 - Our deft shift from the NAIA to the NCAA
 - Our reinstatement of faculty academic governance
- Some of their suggestions included the following:
 - That we might benefit from adding staff in certain support areas
 - That we need to decide how our endowment will be used to support future improvements in our operations and services

The team had many other observations, suggestions, and recommendations, which will be summarized for you after we receive the final report from the Higher Learning Commission. *Please keep in mind that the notes presented here are just a partial summary of the evaluators' informal preliminary comments.* The team's formal written report will have to be vetted and accepted by the HLC office, an HLC review panel, and the HLC's Institutional Actions Council. All of that

activity will occur throughout the upcoming winter season. We will receive official word on our reaffirmation next spring, after the HLC's Board of Trustees accepts the Institutional Action Council's decision on the reaffirmation of our accreditation.

I especially thank and commend both Dr. Jann Weitzel, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and our Self-Study Steering Committee for their excellent, diligent work in planning and guiding the self-study over the better part of two years. Dr. Weitzel is also to be applauded for the very effective fashion in which she scheduled and coordinated the team's visit. In view of what she has achieved in behalf of this institution, I can state with confidence that, at this moment in history, no one knows more about today's Lindenwood University than Provost Weitzel! We are fortunate to have such a knowledgeable and effective higher-education professional as our chief academic officer.

What Is All Of The Fuss About Alumni?

On occasion, I have been dubbed "The Alumni President" because one of the highest priorities of the present Lindenwood administration has

been to increase the attention paid to the important role that our graduates continue to play in Lindenwood's character and advancement throughout their lives. I cannot say that I have minded that moniker. In fact, I find it flattering.

Yet I know that many of our present students and some of our staff wonder why people who have graduated should continue to receive so much interest from us and continue to be so involved with our campuses. The answers to that question are numerous and real.

The Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (<http://www.case.org>) identified the following benefits that an institution derives from maintaining a positive relationship with its alumni:

- “• Alumni are an institution's most loyal supporters.
- Alumni are fundraising prospects.
- Alumni generate invaluable word-of-mouth marketing among their social and professional networks.
- By engaging alumni, an institution can continue to benefit from their skills and experience.
- Alumni are great role models for current students and are often well placed to offer practical support to students as they start their careers.

- Alumni are often in the position to engage the expertise of the institution in their professional lives.
- Your alumni are your international ambassadors. They take their knowledge of your institution to their hometowns and countries and into their professional and social networks.”

Fundamentally, a lifelong relationship between a university and her students benefits all stakeholders in the university’s fold, including the present-day students.

The above ideas represent the pragmatics of alumni stewardship. In my opinion, there are even more significant and meaningful reasons for maintaining good alumni connections.

A university campus is a transformative (and I would say “magical”) place unlike any other human venue. Teachers and students develop a devotion to the pursuit of truth . . . and to one another . . . on a decidedly consensual basis. Within that mutual commitment, adult reasoning and open thought and exchange can be conducted with minimal interference from too many other interests that are, well, less selfless. There is a deep mutual understanding that central purposes of the relationship are the student’s learning and his or her future; also, to determine how the latter combination will affect the advancement of the world.

The role of staff and administration is to ensure that this unique developmental relationship is established, nourished, and optimized for the best possible results. Effectively, then, the whole interpersonal milieu of the university embraces the student and provides the support and substance needed to empower the student to “live the largest life possible” (John L. Roemer, former Lindenwood President). In light of these observations, the latin term “alma mater,” or “nourishing mother,” begins to make sense. Further, just as the relationship between a mother and her child is lifelong one (in most cases), so is the connection between a university and her students. No wonder our alumni are our “most loyal supporters.” No wonder we are theirs.

What Lindenwood Alumni Do For Us Regularly Let me put some meat on the general outline of points of alumni importance presented earlier:

- Our alumni association and clubs conduct fundraising events, such as the St. Charles club’s fall alumni fashion show, to support our student scholarships.
- Most of the very distinguished and helpful individuals who usher at the J. Scheidegger Center productions are Lindenwood’s faithful graduates.

- At almost any Lindenwood event that is open to the public, a very large percent of those in attendance are former Lindenwood students who still enjoy the special intellectual and personal “nourishment” that their university provides. Could we fill the house without them?
- Our alumni attend and assist with many first-year student events and functions, including the fall convocation.
- Almost weekly, we receive prospective student or staff referrals from past Lindenwood students.
- When a gift of great magnitude – meaning hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars – arrives unexpectedly, that gift is almost always a bequest from an alumna or alumnus. It is a final tribute and expression of devotion to Lindenwood. One example is the recent, large bequest from alumna Jane Blood, which now helps support student travel to scholarly conferences.
- When I attend a community function almost anywhere in the St. Louis region, I encounter individuals who are talking up the wonders of Lindenwood University to all who will listen. They are our alumni – our perpetual ambassadors.
- Our graduates send us their children and grandchildren, as well as neighbors, friends and distant relatives, to enroll here.
- Because so many of the University’s graduates are very successful, many of the region’s business, education, and media leaders are

Lindenwood alumni. Their repeated successes cause Lindenwood's image to glisten and help refuel our pride as we read or hear about our former students' continued achievements. News of their accomplishments reminds us why we are here, doing what we do.

- Our graduates provide innumerable volunteer services to their *alma mater*, all around campus, on an ongoing basis.

That considerable list was easy to think of, and it is but a humble sample of the various means through which Lindenwood's "children" express their adoration for, and lifetime commitment to, their *alma mater*.

What Lindenwood Does For Her Alumni Regularly A university's lifelong connection with her graduates is a bidirectional arrangement. There are several ways in which we continue to serve our students after they complete their degrees. Here are just a few of them:

- Lindenwood maintains a full-time Alumni Relations Office to focus on communicating with and serving our graduates. The employees of that office are regularly available to inform or update our former students on university events and developments as well as the special privileges and opportunities their alumnus status

carries. The office also organizes and implements several alumni publications and events each year.

- Our Alumni Relations Office publishes *The Linden Bark* e-newsletter on the first of most months, to announce upcoming events, encourage alumni participation in university occasions, and convey campus news of likely interest.
- The *Connection*, a full-color, full-featured glossy magazine is mailed via USPS three times per year and is made available online as well. It contains in-depth articles, class news, and a bounty of pictures of alumni, current students and faculty members, campus facilities, and major events. It is one of the best alumni magazine series I have seen in my four+ decades as a higher education professional.
- We mail homecoming announcements and registration forms to our graduates and arrange many special events, including the traditional homecoming reception, so that those who return to campus will have every possible opportunity to recollect and savor their college days, reunite with their classmates, and learn about the latest plans and projects at their school.
- The Alumni Relations Office invites several of our Alumni Association members to participate in the proofing and editing of many of our alumni publications. They are also asked to make content recommendations for future editions of those publications.

- Periodic estate planning columns are emailed to alumni, to provide information on changes in laws and regulations affecting bequests and describe various options for ensuring the desired disposition for one's estate.
- Lindenwood sponsors a very large annual alumni picnic in late spring and encourages everyone to bring their family members to the fete. Some years we see hundreds of participants.
- Lindenwood's First Lady, Lois Evans, hosts several of the monthly St. Charles Alumni Club meetings at the Lindenwood House several times each year. As a two-time graduate of Lindenwood and a member of that association, she is delighted to welcome its members in for snacks, coffee, good conversation, and productive organization business on those Saturdays.
- We offer a free Lindenwood University Alumni card to all of our graduates. With it, they receive free or reduced-cost admission to many Lindenwood events, discounts at various restaurants and shops, and access to our student commons facility.

Those examples do not cover everything, but they present a fair overview of the benefits we happily afford our alumni. Why do we do all of that? By now, I think you know. In a very real sense, a university's alumni are collectively the preservationist of its past, the

steward of its present, and the assurance of its future. They are always with us, and we treasure their allegiance!

Facilities Updates

At its November 8 meeting the Lindenwood Board of Directors approved the following:

1. Architectural consultation regarding conceptual possibilities and options for expanding the capacity and functionality of Butler Library on the St. Charles campus
2. Construction of a seating grandstand and press box structure with a 1,000 spectator capacity at our stadium track behind the Hyland Arena
3. Construction of a second new residence hall along West Main Street at our Belleville Campus

On another note, both Lindenwood and St. Charles Community College now have their logos on both the front and rear of our Center for Nursing and Allied Health Sciences. Below is a view of the rear of the building, as seen from I-64/Highway 40.



Congratulations Corner

Kudos is due Coach **Carl Hutter** and Lindenwood's **men's soccer team** for their second straight regular season and MIAA tournament championships. Now our team – which this week *was elevated to the top rank nationally in NCAA Division II* – advances to the NCAA DII championship tournament. What impressive prowess, gentlemen! You make us all very proud.

Say hello and congratulations to **Dr. Jack Beckerle** and **Dr. Steve Suess**. Both professors recently completed their EdD degrees, on top of fulfilling their myriad duties as faculty members and student mentors. Gentlemen, you too make us very proud.

I am pleased to announce that **Dr. Joe Parisi** recently had his title changed: He is now **Vice President for Enrollment Management**, in recognition of the recent increase in his administrative responsibility. All of the St. Charles campus admissions offices and programs report to him.

In Closing

As we approach the holiday season, I want to personally thank you for all that you do daily to make Lindenwood the best it can be for its students. May you and your family enjoy all of the blessings of the seasonal celebrations.

JDE
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