

July 2006

## *A Moment for Grove City College*

The founding mission statement of Grove City College was to provide an **excellent education** at an **affordable cost** in a **Christian environment**. And that foundation remains the same after 130 years. A recent “Moment for Grove City College” highlighted the excellent education component; this issue focuses on what it means to maintain a Christian environment.

A distinguished former president wrote: “A basic principle woven into the College’s life from the days of Isaac Ketler, the founder, to the present is that learning aims at developing goodness and virtue, that education has a moral dimension. The College has had the conviction that students best realize their academic and moral potential in an atmosphere which highlights their responsibility to God, to family, to country and to the laws of society.”

While we are nominally affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), we are actually non-sectarian or, as our founding charter refers to it, “undenominational.” We do not have a statement of faith nor do we have speech or dress codes as many Christian colleges do. We do have standards and principles that promote what I call the mutual respect we must have for each other and for each other’s property. We are not a church and we are not narrowly doctrinal. We are first and foremost a school of higher education that is respectful of a broad range of faith traditions.

How do all of these components (Christian environment, academics, etc.) come together? I have asked some of my colleagues — Dr. William Anderson, Dr. Jean-Noel Thompson and Dr. Stan Keehlwetter — to share their views:

**Q: Dr. Anderson, as our Provost, when we talk about a Christian worldview in the curriculum of our College, what do we mean?**

**A:** We mean precisely what the College mission states: “Intellectual inquiry remains open to the questions religion raises and affirms the answers Christianity offers [based upon our] commitment to Christian truth, morals and freedom.”

Our mission, then, places the College in a unique position – we are neither a Bible college nor a strictly secular institution but occupy the middle ground between the two. This creates a dynamic, healthy tension within the curriculum as the College avoids both extremes, yet insists upon the centrality of sound academics shepherded by Christian virtues in all of its courses.

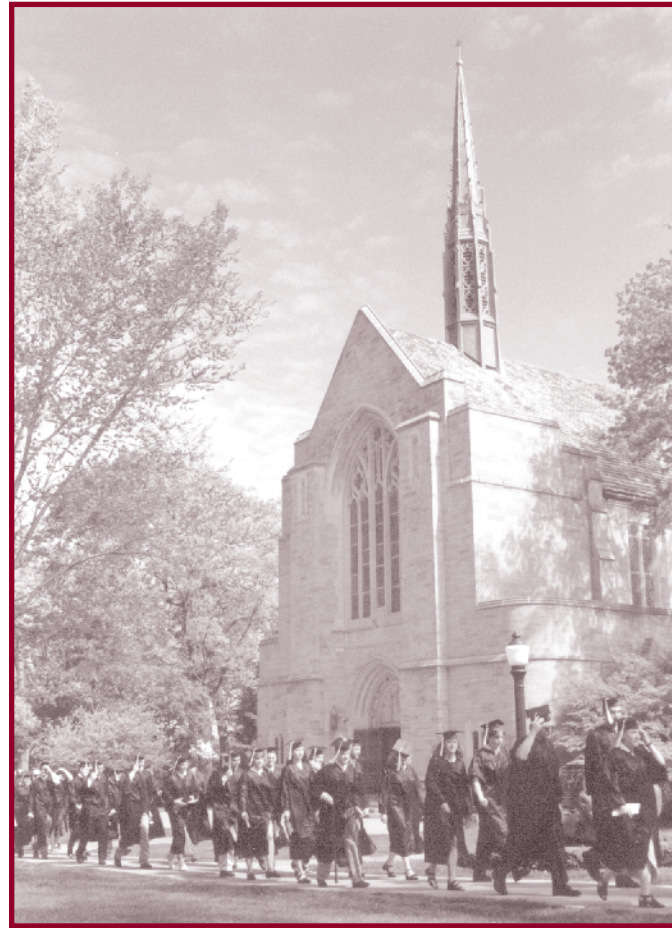
For this reason, Grove City College faculty and students enjoy *greater academic freedom* in our classrooms than at secular or narrowly religious institutions. In recent years, our openness to intellectual inquiry and faith issues has drawn top scholars to join our faculty. They have grown weary of the tedious intellectual narrowness of those institutions where sound academic excellence and a Christian worldview are not permitted to mingle.

How a Christian worldview is specifically introduced varies by discipline. But there is one constant – solid content never is compromised; how faith informs learning and knowledge never is neglected. Our students and faculty would have it no other way.

The academic preparation is sound and rigorous, and our graduates are accepted at the nation’s top graduate and professional schools. A Grove City College degree is distinctive in America and therefore highly valued and highly recognized by graduate schools, professional schools and employers alike.

**Q: Dr. Thompson, as Vice President for Student Life and Learning, what does your office do to support the Christian environment of our College?**

**A:** The Office of Student Life and Learning has multiple opportunities to impact the lives of students outside of the classroom. We are committed to fostering a campus environment and relationships that center on **spiritual mentorship** in everyday life. While such relationships and interactions can and do occur spontaneously, we are intentional in the following ways:



- Training our Residence Life staff to serve as spiritual mentors to their residents
- Working with our fraternities, sororities and men's housing groups to bring about a stronger presence of spiritual development among their members and within their activities
- Working closely with the Dean of the Chapel to create a Director of Student Ministries position to start this fall. This live-in director will support our many faith-based student organizations, provide additional direction for campus-wide discipleship programming, as well as create spiritual development opportunities in our Residence Life program.
- Focusing disciplinary interactions upon redemption and reconciliation by taking time in these discussions to end in prayer and to encourage God's presence in the student's growth and development

We remain steadfast in using every opportunity to impart to our students the wonder of God's amazing grace. Our job, along with the faculty and even each student's peers, is to ensure that our students increase in wisdom and stature. We desire for them to take their places as well prepared citizens: mentally, physically and spiritually.

**Q: Dr. Keehlwetter, as Dean of the Chapel, what is your role and the role of our chapel and campus ministries program?**

**A:** As Dean of the Chapel, I oversee all chapel programs and work closely with both our co-curricular Christian faith and outreach groups, and in fact, all students.

Most Grove City College students come from homes and churches that have laid a solid Christian foundation. My job is to encourage students to make that faith tradition their very own. We do this by providing a chapel and campus ministry program that is diverse and spiritually enriching. We recognize, however, that we can only provide opportunities for spiritual growth. Each student has the freedom to choose whether he or she will take advantage of the programs and activities that are offered and develop the disciplines that lead to Christian maturity.

In planning our chapel program, we try to include all of the following elements: biblical preaching and teaching; opportunities for students to share their talents; reports on student volunteer mission experiences; sharing of personal testimony, especially by College faculty and administrators; worship events; and Bible-based approaches to contemporary issues. We draw not only on our faculty and students for presentations, but also endeavor to bring outstanding and cutting-edge preachers and Christian leaders, both women and men, from numerous Christian traditions.

Beyond our organized chapel program, the Religious Activities Committee gives support and oversight to a number of on- and off-campus groups. Those on campus, such as Campus Crusade, SALT Company and the Newman Club, provide weekly worship opportunities, small group Bible study, as well as discipleship and evangelism training. Many of our students participate in off-campus ministry groups such as Young Life, Polk Outreach or Steel City Ministries. Another of the great traditions at Grove City has been our student-led and inspired Inner City Outreach (ICO) experiences.

Through all of these various opportunities, my personal goal is for all of our students to embrace enthusiastically faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and to mature in that faith as they progress through their time here at Grove City College.

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Thank you to my colleagues for their views. As you can see, the substance of each discipline and, in fact, all aspects of life on campus is informed by our two great precepts of faith and freedom. No historical quote better addresses this than what J. Howard Pew '00 said in 1934 about education: "Without good morals and high character, knowledge is without value." As graduates of our alma mater, from whatever year or era, we should all recognize the philosophy of which Mr. Pew spoke as the bedrock of Grove City College. It is our most distinctive feature. It will always be our guide and that is a promise.

Yours for Grove City College,



Richard G. Jewell '67, J.D.