

March 2005

A Moment for Grove City College

As many of you know, Grove City College has a threefold mission: to provide “an outstanding education, in a Christian environment, at an affordable price.” I want to highlight one of the three mission components in this “Moment for Grove City College,” the one concerning “an outstanding education.” What exactly does that mean? And how is it measured?

At Grove City College, some important things never change, and these same questions were addressed by President Weir C. Kettler '08 and Dean Alva J. Calderwood, Class of 1896. They walked the campus daily at lunchtime, talking about the College, who our students were and how to best guide their educational paths. Today, Provost Dr. William P. Anderson, our chief academic officer, and I meet weekly in the boardroom in Crawford Hall for lunch, as well as numerous times during the week. These meetings provide us a forum to discuss this important component of our mission – the core of our identity as an institution of higher learning – education.

Here are some of highlights that might help illuminate for you how we continue to carry forward that hallmark of a Grove City College education – excellence. Consider this “Moment” an opportunity to eavesdrop on my weekly lunch meeting with Bill.

Bill, tell me about our current academic profile...

Dick, I am pleased to report that extremely gifted students enroll in our academic program, and their expectations for excellence in teaching and learning are high.

Our present freshman class comes from the top 20 percent of the nation's high school graduates, averaging 1271 on the SAT and 28 on the ACT. Sixty-one percent graduated in the top tenth of their high school class, and 79 percent were in the top fifth. Eighty-two of those 600 freshmen even ranked first or second; 19 were National Merit Finalists.

National ratings in *Barron's* and *U.S. News & World Report* continue to identify us as highly selective and nationally ranked.

What kinds of academic programs are our students entering?

Some brief descriptive statistics should help to give you a sense of our academics.

- The academic program is organized into two schools, both named to memorialize significant leaders in the College's history: The Albert A. Hopeman Jr. School of Science and Engineering and the Alva J. Calderwood School of Arts and Letters, under the senior leadership of Deans Joseph F. Goncz and Dr. John A. Sparks '66, respectively.
- 33 percent of our students major in science and engineering areas, and 66 percent in humanities, business, education or social science. More than half will change their majors at least once during their four years at Grove City. This is important, for we want their educational experience to be one that helps them discover their interests and talents. Learning new things and finding new interests is a very important part of that process. Thus, changing one's major is not an uncommon part of the college experience, and we provide careful advising during that process.
- Students select from 55 majors across 18 departments. Recently, we added two new majors, computer science and entrepreneurship, which are rapidly growing.
- 21 percent of our students major in a business-related field, 12 percent in biology, 11 percent in engineering, 8 percent in education (elementary and/or early childhood) and 7 percent each in English and mathematics/computer science.
- Students also may choose from six pre-professional programs in dentistry, medicine, veterinary, other health-related fields, law and theology.
- 75 percent graduate within four years and 80 percent within five years. The national average is only 35 percent and 55 percent, respectively. Our graduation rates are a credit to the quality of students, faculty and advisers we have here.
- 90 percent of our faculty members hold the doctorate or similar terminal degree in their discipline. This is considered the gold standard in higher education.

How do we measure the value we add at Grove City College? I assume it is not based on grades alone.

These students' success continues once they get here, performing at levels well above national averages. Each spring, for example, seniors take nationally normed examinations in their academic majors. They score at least 50 percent higher than the national average and most at the 90th percentile and higher, quite a testimony to their impressive ability and the high quality of instruction they are receiving in our classrooms.

These scores instantly dispel the myth that the distinctiveness of our education is out of touch with the rest of the world. Yes, we approach higher education from an unapologetically western and Christian worldview, but we insist that our students study and understand a broad range of scholarly perspectives in their disciplines. Take multiculturalism and gender studies as two examples. No educated college graduate can ignore the impact these perspectives are having upon our culture. Our faculty do not ignore these either. On tests in those areas, our



President Richard G. Jewell '67, right, and Provost William P. Anderson talk about Grove City College during their weekly lunches.

sociology students scored at the 90th percentile. Our economics students did just as well on their exams, despite our intentional differences with the statist or quantitative economics taught at many of our nation's universities.

What about the broader exposure to different cultures, different political systems and ideas? What are we doing to prepare students for our very diverse world of people and ideas?

Exposing students to new ideas and cultures does not begin and end at the classroom door. Beginning this summer, our students will have the opportunity for yet broader exposure to the world through our new international education ("IE") program. Directed by Dr. Mark Reuber and Associate Director Dr. Lois Johnson, our IE office will sponsor campuses in London and Paris this summer. More than 50 students will take one or more classes from the eight Grove City College faculty who will study with them. Half will stay a month or longer on site. This is in addition to sending more than 100 students and 17 faculty overseas for shorter travel interim courses already this year.

What about the role of technology, Bill? Our laptop initiative, in which each student receives a laptop computer and printer, is now a decade old. What is happening today in this area?

Technology, like it does everywhere in our lives, strongly shapes how the College delivers education. Thanks to Chief Information Officer Dr. Vincent DiStasi '88 and Instructional Technologist Dr. Fred Jenny, the College not only keeps up with technological changes but also is emerging as a leader in using technology in our academic programs. Our new Hall of Arts and Letters features 18 multimedia classrooms, which are in constant use. Moreover, significant portions of the building, along with the new Student Union, now feature wireless capabilities. These buildings are the fruit of our ongoing *Change & Commitment* Campaign to which so many alumni have given. Students and faculty may go online virtually anywhere and at any time. Information is available at the touch of a finger.

Here are some examples of how technology is transforming the learning process for our students in their classes. Electrical and computer engineering students now rely upon web-based simulations of Tomasulo's Algorithm, which drives the inner workings of computer processors. In science labs, students interface their laptops directly with lab equipment. The Calderwood School is no less aggressive in this area. Faculty are electronically grading papers, as well as using software to help students get the most out of their research and keep an eye out for plagiarism. Courses feature online discussions through campus-wide course management software. Perhaps most impressive is the music department's MIDI lab. When students play a tune on a keyboard, the musical score is immediately transcribed onto the computer screen.

Everyone is aware that we are a college at which teaching is preeminent. Yet, our faculty members are still involved in serious scholarship, aren't they?

As teacher-scholars, our faculty appreciate how good scholarship supports good teaching and how good teaching buttresses good scholarship. In the past year, books have been completed or published by Assistant Dean David Ayers (sociology), Dr. Paul Kengor (political science), Dr. George Van Campbell (sociology), Dr. Paul Schaefer (religion), Dr. Gary Smith '72 (history), Dr. Gillis Harp (history), Dr. Marvin Folkertsma (political science), Dr. Beverly Carter (music), Dr. Shawn Ritenour (economics), Dr. Gary Thompson (mathematics) and Dr. Mark Archibald (mechanical engineering).

Our faculty members are very active in professional associations, constantly presenting papers before peer audiences. Unlike much of higher education today, their scholarship is interwoven with their calling as teachers. Several times a semester, in fact, students take research they've conducted with faculty members and make presentations at professional meetings themselves.

Indeed, another hallmark of a Grove City College education today is the amount of student engagement in the learning process. Our classrooms are exciting places to be.

Passively sitting in desks, taking and memorizing notes, is *passé*. We expect our students to be participants in their educations. We have students engaged in DNA research with Drs. Durwood Ray (biology) and David Jones (chemistry) or creating engineering design projects with our engineering faculty. Others join together as entrepreneurs to propose business start-ups which then compete in our Business Plan Competition each May. Several students even serve as "Student Technology Consultants" to assist the faculty and departments in upgrading their use of technology.

Many other institutions offer excellent educations like Grove City. But we offer something more that sets us apart. We provide our students a moral foundation without compromising our insistence upon academic excellence and rigor. As the College mission states, we are "open to the questions religion raises and affirm the answers Christianity offers." Our students choose Grove City College over other colleges of similar quality for exactly this reason. Members of our faculty are no different. In recent years, our unique combination of excellent academics taught from a Christian world and life view has been the key reason why excellent scholar-teachers time and time again choose to come and teach at Grove City over other institutions.

What are we doing to bring outside voices to the College to inspire and challenge the thinking and learning of our students?

Our extensive evening speakers series – which ranges from noted religious figures to politicians to transplant surgeons to ethicists to Russian sociologists, French political scientists, Mexican businessmen and ambassadors – has done just that for our students, Dick. There is hardly a weeknight when a significant speaker is not addressing some group on campus. All in all, the intent is to provide our students with a wonderfully rounded education that prepares them for adulthood in the workplace and their communities.

From the excellence of our faculty to the Christian world and life view that informs our curriculum, we offer a unique and important educational experience for today's college student. Grove City College continues to be a place where scholarship and character count. It's what sets us apart and what creates the passion for learning that goes on here every day.

*Thanks, Bill, for sharing considerable information about our teaching. The benefit of good teaching and a rigorous academic environment should be familiar to all alumni. It has always been our hallmark, and always will be. **And that is a promise.***

Yours for Grove City College,



Richard G. Jewell '67, J.D.

President