

MESSIAH COLLEGE
2013 STATE OF THE COLLEGE
PRESIDENT KIM S. PHIPPS

Rootedness, Resilience, and Reinvention

Advancing our mission with a profound commitment to our students

Welcome to the official launch of the academic year. Today, we join together to worship and bear witness to a shared commitment to love and serve God and this community. This morning, we are privileged to gather in Parmer Hall of the new Calvin and Janet High Center for Worship and Performing Arts and we are grateful to the many colleagues and benefactors who made this magnificent facility possible. The programming of the High Center's inaugural season promises to enrich our campus life in the upcoming year.

I hope you have enjoyed some relaxing times with friends and family during the summer months, and that you are eagerly anticipating the new academic year. The conclusion to the previous spring semester was filled with intense conversations about focused prioritization and our institution's identity, values and community standards. Summer months provided some much-needed time for us to pause and reflect. I am grateful for these moments of respite because they allow us to gain new insights and perspectives about the challenges before us.

I was reminded again of the importance of reflective time when our daughter, Brooke, turned 21 on July 27th. When your only child reaches that milestone, you find yourself wistfully thinking back to her early years. For Kelly and me, the time has gone by far too quickly (despite what our own *Facebook* photos reveal about the reality of the passage of time). And we have found it far more difficult to emotionally let go than we care to admit.

Last month, I was looking at photographs of Brooke at age 4, and I came upon a series that brought back touching memories of summer evening boat rides at my brother's New Hampshire lake home. One of Brooke's favorite annual activities was to help her uncle drive the boat out into the center of the lake under a canopy of stars. There, my brother would shut off the motor, and we would sit together in silence and stargaze. Brooke enthusiastically prepared for this event by studying a book of constellations so that she could identify them. When the stargazing was over, to Brooke's delight, it was her job to navigate us back to shore by selecting the fixed points in the night sky to serve as our guide.

With youthful zeal, Brooke was following in a long tradition of ancient mariners who relied on celestial fixed points—the sun and stars—to make their way safely across vast expanses of water. To advance our educational mission in this volatile external climate, we need to be like voyagers of the past who relied on the strength of tradition and the guidance of secure reference points, as they responded to obstacles and difficulties. In stressful times, it is tempting to drop an anchor and become paralyzed by fear. But as Christian scholars, workers and servant leaders we must choose to: "*live not as a people of fear but of hope,*" (to quote my predecessor Rodney Sawatsky).

Today, as we confront our challenges, we do so with confidence because we are traversing choppy waters guided by the illumination of our core commitments. The contemporary, ever-changing external educational environment requires us to be rooted and resourceful, to rally together to advance our mission for the sake of our students.

In past addresses, I have articulated the pressures facing Messiah College specifically and higher education, generally. These include:

- the decreasing pool of high school students in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions, which is not expected to rebound until 2021;
- a sputtering national economy and families' inability to pay (due to family income not keeping pace with rising tuition)

- the increased competition from lower-cost educational providers including public universities, community colleges and online resources;
- the competitive pressure from peer institutions that are accelerating their financial aid discount rate beyond 50 percent—levels which are clearly unsustainable—in order to attract more students and, finally,
- the dependence on undergraduate tuition as the primary source of revenue, which always increases financial vulnerability related to fluctuations in enrollment.

Last year, I described the impending “storm” created by these conditions, and this academic year, we are more acutely experiencing the storm’s effects. Now, we must address these problems and the new challenge of a shifting paradigm regarding higher education’s fundamental purpose and role. The media, governmental representatives and the court of public opinion are questioning and even denigrating the value of a college education.

In the midst of this unsettled climate, Messiah College, like many other institutions, faces the most significant obstacles in recent memory to achieving undergraduate enrollment goals. Later this week, we will welcome 654 first-year students to our campus. Fall welcome week is always a joy, but this year our newest class contains 56 fewer first-year students than our targeted goal. We are grateful for strong transfer student enrollment—18 students above our target of 85 students. We also celebrate a strong retention rate of 86.2 percent from first-year to sophomore year. And yet, we project our overall undergraduate enrollment for the 2013-14 academic year to be 2,635 - 35 fewer than our budgeted goal. This decrease will have negative budget implications for the next four years, and we will need to work together to address this challenge.

Although our incoming undergraduate class will be smaller than our targeted goal, we are encouraged by some very positive, qualitative recruitment trends, including an under-represented student enrollment of 13 percent—our highest percentage on record. Our number of first-year international students has increased from 27 to 37, and the SAT score improved by 15 points from FY13.

The growth of our graduate programs is also encouraging. Overall graduate enrollment for FY13 reached an all-time high of 320 students, exceeding our goal of 285. The FY14 goal is 379 and we will likely exceed that goal as well.

These achievements infuse hope into our circumstances even though we are facing very formidable challenges. Thank you for the many ways you are actively helping to recruit prospective students. When it comes to enrolling and retaining students, our destiny as a college community is truly interconnected.

As we confront higher education’s present realities, we will advance our mission by relying on our community’s rootedness, resilience, and reinvention. In unsettled times, we must keep our eyes focused on the fixed points of a deep and abiding Christian faith, a clear and compelling mission, an unwavering commitment to the liberal and applied arts and sciences, and a passionate dedication to the holistic development of our students.

Rootedness in our Christian mission and liberal and applied arts and sciences.

The rootedness of our identity and mission provide us with secure and stable navigational reference points. When I reflect on our mission, I often return to the charge Richard Hughes, distinguished professor of religion, delivered to me at my presidential inauguration, “*Nurture these roots.*” Dr. Hughes proclaimed that “*there is no college anywhere in America like Messiah College*” because of its commitment to both cross-centered living and gracious Christianity.¹

Although our common mission and Christian faith unite us, many different ideas and perspectives are represented within our community. We need to understand how the identity of Messiah College is perceived and experienced by all of our constituents: students, alumni, faculty, staff, administrators, benefactors and the broader public. From its inception, Messiah College has welcomed students from

many denominations beyond its founding one. In the 1990s, we took the important step of restating our identity and mission by specifically referencing the heritage of the three theological streams—Anabaptism, Pietism and Wesleyanism—that inform our institutional core beliefs and values. But, we must also recognize and be sensitive to the reality that the religious profile of the College’s students, alumni and benefactors has not changed substantially in the past 30 years. They are highly representative of mainstream American evangelicalism.

Therefore, when we engage in controversial or difficult conversations, our rootedness must lead us to honor our Brethren in Christ heritage even as we seek to address the *whole* Christian church—given the number of traditions represented in our campus community. This is a marvelous opportunity—rising to the challenge of valuing our rootedness in a particular tradition while simultaneously embracing the breadth of Christian traditions represented in our community. Devotion to cross-centered living and gracious Christianity should be a primary distinctive of the Messiah College experience. To effectively prepare our students to lead and serve the 21st century church and society, we must equip them to value their steadfast convictions while hospitably engaging others in conversation.

Our commitment to liberal and applied arts and sciences

As we seek to incarnate the Christian foundation of our mission, we also embody a heritage of dedication to the liberal and applied arts and sciences. Complementing our long-standing commitment to the liberal arts, “substantial enrollments” in the applied arts and sciences “*added greater economic viability to the college, but also helped to fulfill its service-oriented mission,*”² wrote historian E. Morris Sider in his College history. Today, we nurture an engaging vision for service and practical knowledge that actually unites our students from the liberal and applied arts and sciences in many endeavors including the Agape Center for Service-Learning and the Collaboratory for Strategic Partnerships and Applied Research.

We also know that the liberal arts and, particularly the humanities, are central to the holistic development of all of our students. But, we need to work together to more effectively communicate the value of the liberal arts at Messiah College and beyond. This is one of the goals identified in theme one of our strategic plan.

I recently participated in a Council of Independent Colleges board meeting that focused on advocacy for the liberal arts. In an open letter to President Obama, CIC President Richard Ekman emphasizes that the study of the liberal arts in residential settings is the “*distinctively American form of education—with room for questioning, discussion, creativity, interpersonal dynamics and supportive faculty – that has made American colleges and universities the envy of the world.*”³ He argues that online learning can enrich this type of educational experience, but it will never replace all of the proven learning outcomes of a traditional liberal arts education.⁴ CIC is initiating a national campaign to promote the value of the liberal arts with “new messages, new messengers, and new media” as the top priority for private colleges. Our educational sector including Messiah College must persuasively communicate *new messages* about the tangible value of the liberal arts in helping people adapt, embrace change and solve complicated problems; we must recruit *new messengers*—students, faculty, alumni and employers—beyond college presidents to attest to this value; and we must effectively use *new media* including social networking to extend the reach of these messages.⁵

Whatever our academic discipline, we need to counter the overwhelming contemporary assumption that higher education *merely* equals job training - or as the Obama administration’s misguided proposal suggests, higher education should equal a certain income potential. Rebecca Chopp, president of Swarthmore College wrote, “*It doesn’t matter if a person is a banker or an artist, a teacher or an activist, one’s life is meaningful in and through one’s work, service, and inner life, not because of the income one receives. This intentional focus on the cultivation of individual character is a long tradition in the liberal arts.*”⁶

Messiah College’s historic commitment to the liberal arts and our mission to educate students toward maturity of intellect, character and faith offers our graduates key advantages among employers. In a

recent report “It Takes More than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success,” most employers highly value “*ethical judgment and integrity; intercultural skills and the capacity for continued new learning*”⁷—skills that we aspire to cultivate in all of our students.

Many Messiah alumni, like Kevin Driver, M.D. a cardiology fellow at the University of Virginia, serve as effective messengers for the value of the liberal arts. Dr. Driver, who studied both philosophy and biochemistry, wrote, “*While a liberal arts education won’t get you a job as a scientist, engineer or computer programmer, it just might help you hone the skills necessary to excel in that field. Being able to read and think critically—and communicate effectively—are at the core of education in the humanities.*”⁸ We take pride in the achievements of all of our alumni, including our humanities graduates, who were recently recognized with Fulbright and U.S. State Department scholarships.

Excellence in the liberal *and* applied arts and sciences promotes ‘deep learning,’ which delves beneath facts to explore broader connections and meaning.⁹ When we focus on “best practices,” a national study recently concluded that “*there may be a minimal relationship between what colleges spend on education and the quality of the education students receive.*”¹⁰ According to the National Survey of Student Engagement study which identified four essential practices that promote student learning:

- “Good teaching with high quality interactions with faculty”
- “High expectations and academic challenge”
- “Interaction with ideas and people different from one’s own” and
- “Deep learning”¹¹

At Messiah, we value the deep learning made possible through the pursuit of inclusive excellence, so we are diligently working to implement the goals of the College’s diversity plan. This plan is guiding our effort to welcome more students, faculty and staff from underrepresented backgrounds and to promote greater intercultural understanding for our entire community. As stated in the College-wide learning objectives, in order to prepare our graduates to be servants, leaders and reconcilers in the world, they must be equipped to demonstrate concern for justice and respect for diversity.

But, our community’s intentions must be reinforced by our actions. Toward that end, we are engaged in educational assessment that flows from our commitment to enriching our inclusive excellence, interactive teaching and depth of student learning. Jennifer Fisler, associate professor of education and program director for assessment, states that the ultimate purpose of assessment is to “*cultivate a place for learning and then caring enough to listen to the experiences of students and observe their work in order to know if that learning is happening and then decide how we can improve.*”

Messiah students often provide the best endorsement for their collegiate experience. In May, Lynette Mhangami offered a moving baccalaureate reflection about finding her place at Messiah College. A few years ago, Lynette’s passion for field hockey brought her from Zimbabwe to the United States. After a difficult year plagued by personal injury, surgery and adjusting to living in a new culture, Lynette transferred to Messiah College, where, she experienced rootedness, community and opportunity. Since graduating, Lynette is working as a research analyst for the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. In the following video clip, Lynette speaks about her College experience. (*Show video clip*)

Resilience for the present and the future

Lynette testifies to the way Messiah College’s rootedness helped her to persevere and succeed. She also exemplifies resilience—the second quality we must nurture as a community to navigate strenuous times. Resilience can be defined as “*The power or ability to return to the original form, position, etc., after being bent, compressed, or stretched; elasticity—ability to recover readily from illness, depression, adversity or the like; buoyancy.*”¹² Resilience does not refer to eliminating risk; it refers to the capacity to build a robust future by drawing from the institution’s mission as a guide for present priorities.

Because of the resilience our community has exhibited from its founding to the present, we have confidence in the future. Not only has Messiah College weathered national and international crises such

as two world wars, the Great Depression and a more recent Great Recession, but our forbearers also survived an especially perilous year shortly after Messiah was founded. In the academic year 1916-17:

- Student enrollment declined and donations were “the lowest to date,”
- The College was highly indebted after the construction of Old Main,
- Members of the founding denomination were ambivalent about the need for the College and
- Messiah’s founder, S. R. Smith, died very suddenly.¹³

In the crucible of that year, we see the enduring quality of Messiah College being forged. At the Brethren in Christ General Conference in 1917, Eli Engle offered these inspiring words “*Institutions as well as individuals pass through crises which in large measure determine their future and destiny.*”¹⁴

We are the beneficiaries of the vision and faithfulness of these early leaders. They rallied “stalwart” church members, fervently prayed and determined that despite the formidable obstacles, Messiah College should continue. To strengthen the College, they established a path of careful financial stewardship by limiting borrowing to 25 percent or less of future building costs, and engaging in vigorous fundraising and recruitment efforts.¹⁵ Early campus employees and supporters also demonstrated resourcefulness by tending a garden, and, one year, with the help of local church members, the campus community canned 5,500 quarts of fruit.¹⁶ Don’t worry, I am not suggesting we break out the canning jars and pressure cookers as a new financial strategy, but I do value this historical example of the campus community working together. Also, in the midst of significant financial pressures, our early leaders strategically planned for the future, while moving forward—such as implementing a plan for campus beautification, which included the planting of a large number of trees and the creation of the walking path along the Yellow Breeches creek.¹⁷

As we draw upon the character of our past, we must continue to develop our institutional strength. We are fortunate to address our current enrollment and financial challenges from a position of stability, due to a healthy endowment; a supportive and prudent board of trustees; dedicated faculty, administration and staff; talented students and a well-fortified fiscal position—despite decreasing tuition-related revenue. We must, however, exercise resilience and resourcefulness to retain our position of strength for the present and the future.

The College’s strategic plan calls for bolstering our financial strength on several fronts—through expanding current revenue streams, increasing endowment returns and aligning our financial resources with mission-centric priorities. We are diversifying our revenue sources by adding mission-centered quality graduate programs, enhancing the scope of conference programming and increasing fundraising capacity. To proactively manage the crucial financial asset of our endowment we designated an internal endowment team, and we are already reaping financial rewards as a result of that decision.

In addition, we are practicing resilience through a focused prioritization process to reduce annual expenses and reallocate existing resources to best support our institutional mission. Through a strategic and judicious process, we are making necessary, albeit hard, decisions to ensure the College’s continued strength and vitality.

This type of prioritization comes with difficult conversations and real loss. Be assured that College leadership takes this process seriously, considers the community’s input and strives to transparently communicate decisions. Thank you for responding by offering relevant questions and helpful suggestions. Engaging the prioritization process with a positive attitude is essential to our community’s well-being. The outcomes of current and future prioritization reviews will be shared with our community as part of my quarterly Presidential Updates.

Though painful at times, prioritization does offer a new opportunity to calibrate our pursuits toward the goal of advancing our mission for the ultimate benefit of our students. Whether you serve in academic departments, enrollment management, advancement, finance, ITS, student affairs, safety, campus events, facility services, or other administrative support units—your contribution is essential to educating the

next generation of servant/leaders for Church and society. This is an extraordinary privilege; indeed, it is a sacred calling!

Even as Messiah College is becoming more resilient, we also have the privilege of participating in our students' path beyond resiliency to reinvention. For one of our graduate students, Jeff Sullo, pursuing a master's degree in counseling is part of a personal journey of resilience and reinvention. Early in his adult life, Jeff discovered that he did not enjoy teaching; so he and his wife established a landscaping business. Sadly, just three years into their marriage, his wife was diagnosed with leukemia and she passed away nine months later. Reeling from the loss, Jeff returned to teaching at a church-related school. He found that because of his personal loss, others began to seek him out for compassionate counsel. He says, "*I felt very honored, but very unprepared.*" This led him to pursue an education to become a professional counselor. Although he lives in Connecticut, in Messiah College he found exactly the kind of flexible, nationally accredited program that could help him pursue his dream of helping others. In the following video clip, Jeff explains how he's personally growing and developing through his Messiah experience. (*Show video clip*)

Reinvention for a prosperous future

As Jeff's story illustrates, resilience can lead to reinvention and growth. For Messiah, embracing our current environment and the changes it requires can inspire our reinvention. Rebecca Chopp encourages us to create a new higher education narrative of "*innovation and flexibility and nimbleness.*"¹⁸

Not only has higher education changed, but Millennial students have also dramatically changed. The better we understand this generation of students, the more we can effectively adjust and reinvent our educational pedagogy to better serve them and help them reach their greatest potential.

Like every generation, the Millennials have amassed labels from the more unflattering, like "narcissistic" and "entitled,"¹⁹ —to the more strength-based, like "tech savvy" and "welcoming of diversity." Millennial students have been described in such general terms as:

- "Earnest and optimistic" and
- "Less creative and less empathetic"²⁰

A recent Time magazine article contends that this generation is not "*trying to take over the Establishment . . . because they're growing up without one.*"²¹

As we know, our students' routine communication is increasingly mediated by interactive screens. As a result, they have a "low tolerance for boredom."²²

The learning style of Millennials fits these broad characteristics. Students in the Millennial generation want to draw their own conclusions based on active discussions.²³ They tend to believe in equality and the need to listen and respect others' opinions.²⁴

- They are collaborative and eager to apply what they're learning to their lives.²⁵
- Millennials prefer what one book characterizes as a "blend of high tech and high touch"²⁶ academic engagement.

The changing characteristics of our students compel us to adapt, innovate and reinvent some of our pedagogy and approaches to our supervising their employment and developing mentoring relationships.

Experience-based opportunities fit the active learning style of Millennials. Students who engage in high-impact experiential learning tend to have higher levels of graduate school achievement, career opportunities and meaningful community engagement. The current global and economic climate makes it critical for students to apply knowledge, skills and competencies as an essential element of their vocational preparation.

For many years, Messiah College has valued and promoted experiential learning. In fact, it's one of our

institutional distinctives. Now, we are considering a proposal to formalize this commitment by requiring that every student engage in experiential learning—such as undergraduate research, internships, off-campus study, participation in mentored leadership experiences, or service-learning. Students will reflect on their learning by developing an e-portfolio which summarizes their experiential learning outcomes—a tool which can be shared with future employers and graduate admissions committees. Christy Hanson, director of career development, suggests that, “*the blending of the goals of a liberal arts education with intentional professional preparation will offer our graduates a competitive edge to make significant contributions both personally and professionally.*”

Indeed, “high-tech, high-touch” learning is valued by many Messiah faculty who are integrating digital technology into the teaching and delivery of classroom and online courses. In one exciting endeavor, Fabrizio Cilento, assistant professor of communication, is overseeing Cinemablography, an online, collaborative digital humanities and film initiative.

Original student-written, directed, and filmed segments power the interactive vision of Cinemablography. One film series, “This is Italy” documents the experience of participants in Messiah’s Italy cross-cultural course. The resulting films are professional quality and represent the experiential and global engagement we value at Messiah College. (*Show video*)

International study and related conversations nourish Millennials’ inclusive outlook. We are currently in the process of reshaping our approach to global learning to meet institution goals of improved financial stewardship and prioritization, but also to facilitate deeper learning by more frequent engagement of our own faculty and students in international contexts, conversations and research. Messiah College’s cross-cultural courses remain central to our vision for global engagement including the addition of new courses such as Instruction and Assessment with English Language Learners in Indonesia, which will be taught by Jan Dormer, assistant professor of TESOL; as well as a summer China cross-cultural study course taught by Stella Ye, assistant professor and Chinese program advisor.

Even as we are reinventing our approach to global engagement, we are also re-imagining our physical campus learning spaces. The newly completed Murray Library Learning Commons maximizes collaboration, flexibility and accessibility—characteristics highly desired by Millennials—by bringing together the resources of the library, media services, the Writing Center, the Learning Center, disabilities services and learning technology services. And library educators and other colleagues have further reinvented the space with their inspired “Extreme Makeover” of the glass-walled study rooms. Complementing the resources of the Learning Commons, the Learning Technology Services Team has launched a new Innovation Zone designed as a one-stop-shop for students, faculty and staff who have questions or ideas related to the use of technology and video integration.

We are also reinventing our graduate offerings and other new academic programs to address societal needs and increase student enrollment. John Addleman, associate provost for graduate and nontraditional programs, is leading the exploration of additional graduate programs in health sciences, nursing, international development, organizational leadership and business. In addition, he is overseeing the design of a pilot program to encourage more high school students to pursue the option of dual enrollment at Messiah College.

In response to changing demographics and attitudes, we need to reinvent some aspects of the way we assess prospective students. Millennials increasingly arrive at Messiah College with considerable accrued course credits and life experiences—including online courses, AP and CLEP credits, and service related experiences. A task force to study these “swirling students” is considering ways Messiah can efficiently and effectively account for prior learning experiences and situate students to succeed by locating them within our community in an academically and developmentally appropriate way.

We also continue to respond to prospective students’ changing demographics and characteristics by reinventing enrollment strategies and tactics. The enrollment management team is working closely with

the school deans and academic department chairs to enhance the marketing recruitment of our undergraduate programs. A newly appointed “academic marketing coordinator” will lead an admissions team to develop monthly recruitment progress reports for deans and department chairs and provide academic departments with helpful information about best practices for Open House programming and early outreach to prospective students.

I am pleased to report that international student recruitment is steadily progressing. After participating in a series of prospective student recruitment fairs in Vietnam, we’re delighted to welcome four first-year students from this country. Three students from Malaysia are also part of our incoming class, two of these students connected with Messiah College through our partnership with Methodist College Kuala Lumpur. This year we will have a total of 12 students from Malaysia studying with us. Options for implementing intensive English instruction programming to serve our growing international student population is under serious consideration.

Call to action

In all the ways we’ve discussed and more, we must embrace this present moment and reinvent certain aspects of our educational content and institutional structures and practices to address current challenges. I am encouraged by colleagues across campus who are creatively thinking about how to advance our mission. Let me share a few examples:

- Three faculty members—Daniel Finch, Brent Good and David Kasparek from The Department of Visual Arts—volunteered to lead a student committee that focused on enrollment strategies. Their efforts culminated in a specific action plan including recent graduate Alex Getty’s complete redesign of the department’s website.
- Mark Wirtz led the Department of Dining Services to reinvent Messiah College’s meal plan. Informed by student feedback, the new Dining Dollars plan applies a transparent formula to offer students increased flexibility and opportunities for cost savings while simultaneously ensuring that Dining Services meets its financial targets.
- Gladys Robalino, assistant professor of Spanish peninsular literature, is harnessing the potential of online innovation to engage students in her Counter-Reformation and Baroque course. When she could not locate an appropriate textbook for the course, she decided to work with her students to develop their own multimedia, interactive online text.
- Brad Markley, director of facility services, and his team have revolutionized how Messiah College practices stewardship of our utilities. Despite dramatic increases in national utility costs, Brad and his team have returned our campus fuel and utilities expenditures to the 2010 level, which amounts to an increased annual savings of 400,000 to 500,000 dollars. Thoughtful contract negotiations, proactive scheduling, the installation of building controls, equipment upgrades and solar-thermal systems have enabled us to achieve significant savings and meet sustainability goals.

Thank you for practicing reinvention and resourceful stewardship as a means of service to Messiah College on behalf of our students.

Concluding thoughts

With the start of each new academic year indeed, it is our privilege to renew our commitment to inspire our students toward maturity of intellect, character and Christian faith. The focus on our institutional mission must animate all of our communal pursuits. When we learn of students’ or colleagues’ successes, we will celebrate together. When obstacles arise, we will face them together. In all things, we will strive to honor Christ and fulfill our educational purpose together.

In an 1862 address to the U.S. Congress, Abraham Lincoln wrote these words, “*It is not ‘can any of us imagine better?’ but, ‘can we all do better?’ The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise—with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew.” President Lincoln’s timeless words echo Messiah College’s rhetorical vision “to see anew.”²⁷ In the midst of uncertain times for higher education, we draw inspiration*

from the example of a leader who was guiding our nation through a time of great conflict and consequences—far beyond the circumstances of our current situation.

In a similar way, we draw courage from the skillful example of past mariners who successfully traveled great distances through churning waters by focusing on reliable celestial points. When we read the sobering reports about the state of higher education, we may feel like sailors on unfamiliar seas, searching for our sea legs, and longing for the security of solid land or even a return to the shore from which we departed. But, today I challenge you to embrace the difficult environment surrounding us and seize new opportunities as we focus on fixed points to help us navigate toward a promising future - - together. By relying on the rootedness of our Christ-centered educational mission and our steadfast commitment to the liberal and applied arts and sciences we can meet challenges by demonstrating resilience and mutual support as we partner with students and colleagues to engage in purposeful reinvention.

As we initiate this academic year, let us commit anew to our mission, to our students and to one other. Let us embrace the opportunity to live and learn together—seasoning our conversations with grace and gratitude and serving one other with honor and humility.

Earlier this year, Nobel Peace Prize winner Leymah Gbowee, a leader of the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace, lectured here in Parmer Hall. She concluded her remarks with this charge: *“The world awaits all of us to step out, to do something. The world awaits all of us to leave large prints. And God is on hand to strengthen all of us.”*²⁸

May we—the Messiah College community, individually and collectively, with God’s help, do all we can to leave large prints by effectively educating our students to lead and serve a broken world!

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- ² E. Morris. Sider, [Messiah College: A History](#) (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Press, 1984) 254.
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- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Informed by proceedings of the Council of Independent Colleges Board Meeting, Washington, D.C., 13 June 2013.
- ⁶ Rebecca S. Chopp, Daniel H. Weiss, and Eugene M. Tobin, "Building a new case for liberal arts colleges," [Independent Winter](#) 2013.
- ⁷ Hart Research Associates, "It Takes More than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success," [Association of American Colleges and Universities](#), 10 Apr. 2013.
- ⁸ "Philosophy, biochemistry alum serves as cardiology fellow," [Messiah College: StoryLink](#), 11 July 2013, Messiah College, 21 Aug. 2013.
- ⁹ Informed by Thomas F. Nelson Laird, Rick Shoup, and George Kuh, "Measuring Deep Approaches to Learning Using the National Survey of Student Engagement," proc. of Annual Meeting of the Association for Institutional Research, Chicago, IL, May 14 – 18, 2005.
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- ¹³ E. Morris. Sider, [Messiah College: A history](#) (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Press, 1984) 69-70.
- ¹⁴ Ibid, 70.
- ¹⁵ Ibid, 71-72.
- ¹⁶ Ibid, 74.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, 77.
- ¹⁸ Rebecca S. Chopp, Daniel H. Weiss, and Eugene M. Tobin, "Building a new case for liberal arts colleges," [Independent Winter](#) 2013.
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- ²¹ Ibid.,
- ²² Chelsea Vandlen, et al., "Engaging the Millennial Generation in Class Discussions," [College Teaching](#) 59 (2011): 1-6.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Amy Novotney, "Engaging the millennial learner," [Monitor on Psychology](#) Mar. 2010, [Monitor on Pyschology](#), Mar. 2010, American Psychological Association, 23 Aug. 2013.
- ²⁶ Neil Howe and Reena Nadler, [Millennials in the workplace: Human resource strategies for a new generation : Implications for educators, employers, and policy makers](#) (Great Falls, VA) : Lifecourse Associates, 2010. *Print*.
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- ²⁸ "Nobel Peace Laureate Leymah Gbowee models courage and conviction," [Messiah College: Messiah News](#), 13 Mar. 2013, 21 Aug. 2013 <<http://blogs.messiah.edu/features/category/lecture/>>.