

# CONCORDIA COLLEGE

March 1, 2018

Greetings to you, friends and partners in mission, from Concordia College.

In the midst of a busy and fruitful 2017-2018 academic year, I take this opportunity to share with you the strategic work that is taking place across campus. Building on the college plan, *Whole Self, Whole Life, Whole World*, Concordia is focusing on learning that is *integrative, inclusive, and innovative*.

## **Integrative Learning**

To integrate is to connect, to make things whole. At Concordia, graduation now requires that every student take what s/he learns in the liberal arts classroom and apply it to addressing a real problem, in real life, in real time. Starting with this fall's entering class, each student must complete at least two of these projects—called PEAK. The projects could arise from a regular course, out of May term, or be proposed by students themselves. What might a PEAK project look like? It could involve lab study to determine the genetic triggers of lupus, clinical nursing in Haiti (while learning French), teaching English to school children in Tanzania, serving as an interfaith consultant for regional businesses with a religiously diverse work force and clientele, or founding a non-profit agency in Fargo Moorhead. Every project will lead students, in the words of our mission, to “influence the affairs of the world” as they enact the love of neighbor.

We are practicing integration, not only in the curriculum, but in our very buildings. The *Integrated Science Center (ISC)* opened the first day of classes for the 2017-2018 academic year. Authorized by the Board of Regents, the \$45 million renovation provides the physical environment to support science education that happens at the interface of instruction and discovery. The redesigned facilities enhance our more engaged teaching methods and “hands on” learning and promote interdisciplinary interaction. Students work side by side with faculty in addressing unscripted problems in order to find real world answers. In this, we grow the strengths of science study and health professions preparation that have long been Concordia marks of distinction.

## **Inclusive Learning**

Inclusive learning calls us to embrace greater diversity. In the words of our 2016 State of the College address, *As an American liberal arts college founded by immigrants, as a college of the church, Concordia will seek out, include, and honor a greater diversity of peoples and ideas, knowing that such action will change campus culture, ways of learning, and responsible engagement in the world*. Inclusion is fundamental to

- Our Mission: Loving our neighbor in response to the liberating love of God
- Our Community: Thriving in an ethnically and religiously plural nation and world
- Our Learning: Educating with intellectual excellence for democratic citizenship, sustainable well-being, and a just society.

Since that 2016 declaration, Concordia has hired its first Chief Diversity Officer, Dr. Edward Antonio, a theologian who did his doctoral work at Cambridge and who comes to us from the University of Denver and the Iliff School of Theology. He has conducted an extensive review of the diversity needs of the college, established the Office of Diversity, worked closely with the President's Diversity Council to develop a college Diversity Statement, addressed immediate campus climate issues, and engaged in relationship building both on and off campus, and more.

In that same time period, Concordia has received a generous grant from the National Science Foundation to bring first-generation, low income students into the STEM fields at Concordia; has received a major grant from the

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to establish greater diversity in our curriculum and pedagogy; and has launched cohort recruitment of under-represented students both from our Fargo-Moorhead community and the Twin Cities.

## **Innovative Learning**

Our celebration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation calls us to remember that we sustain mission not through stasis but through creative, faithful change. For Concordia, such innovation characterizes everything we do, including the integrative and inclusive learning just described. Here, I want to emphasize two kinds of innovation: a college-wide commitment to environmental health, and a commitment to offering new kinds of programming for new kinds of students.

Environmental Health: Concordia now has a history of leadership in sustainability achievements: reductions of water and electricity use, efficient energy design for the Offutt School's Grant Center and the Integrated Science Center, food waste reduction campaigns, the Green Office Program, our high tunnel garden, Long Lake Research Station, EcoHouse, the creation of the Fargo-Moorhead Sustainability Network, and a major environmental learning and citizenship project underwritten by the Margaret A. Cargill Foundation. Last April, Concordia signed the *Integrated Climate Commitment*, in which we pledge to reduce carbon emissions and to work with community partners to increase our ability to manage changes generated by climate change, to become a more resilient college in a more resilient community.

New Kinds of Students: Concordia has now launched new ventures for life-long learners at key moments of their professional development. Two examples must suffice here: (1) our being named one of nine National Language Training Centers for the U.S. Department of Defense, with immersion training in Russian, Arabic, Korean, Persian Farsi, and other critical languages, and (2) our launching of Executive Education for leaders in both business and non-profit agencies. Both endeavors have received rave reviews from participants in their opening rounds.

## **The Affordability of a Concordia Education**

We continue to make a large investment so that students of middle and lower incomes can undertake a Concordia education. Last year alone, the college invested a total of \$37.8 million dollars in financial aid for students enrolled at Concordia. The average scholarship/grant package awarded to newly entering students totaled \$22,127, which constitutes over 50% of the cost of tuition. In addition to scholarship and grant dollars, the college offered new students over \$1.2 million in work study dollars to earn over the course of the academic year. And equally important, Concordia offers students a four-year graduation guarantee, which ensures that students can complete their degrees in four years versus paying for an extra semester or year of college. This also ensures that students have a strong opportunity to enter the work force or enroll in graduate school as soon as possible. Lost income for one year alone may total over \$35,000. Encourage students in your congregation and your community who would like more information to go to the website [www.concordiacollege.edu/admission](http://www.concordiacollege.edu/admission) or email: [admissions@cord.edu](mailto:admissions@cord.edu).

In our mission of faith and learning, in our distinguished faculty and staff, in the lives of our graduates who now influence the affairs of the world, we build on a firm foundation that serves our students and the common good. Soli Deo Gloria.



William J. Craft, President