



Hope for Tomorrow

When a place is called Hope, getting mired in pessimism just wouldn't be right.

And so, while the college faces the challenges resulting from the most significant global economic crisis since the Great Depression, Hope is also looking ahead with a longer view, its focus on how best to continue to do what it has always done. It is, in fact, what the college's mission statement, grounded in nearly 150 years of history, *calls* Hope to do: "educate students for lives of leadership and service in a global society through academic and co-curricular programs of recognized excellence in the liberal arts and in the context of the historic Christian faith."

Admittedly, that calling seemed easier a year ago—before the economy began its downward spiral last September, before norovirus and H1N1 outbreaks in November and April respectively, before a vicious mid-June storm wreaked flood havoc campus-wide. Fortunately, as President James Bultman '63 likes to quip, Hope has so far managed to avoid a plague of locusts. So far.

"It has been one of the more challenging years during my time in higher education," said Dr. Bultman, Hope's president since 1999 and a college professor, dean and president since 1968. "There were so many external factors that impinged on the operation of the college."

The health and weather incidents were blips—although, like institutions nationwide, Hope has plans in place if there's an H1N1 recurrence—but the economy is another matter. Granted, there have been signs that the decline has slowed, maybe stopped, maybe is reversing, but no experts are predicting a quick turn-around.

Distinctive Education. The soaring atrium of the A. Paul Schaap Science Center provides a fitting architectural context for the college's nationally acclaimed program in the natural and applied sciences. Even as Hope weathers today's global economic storms, the college is working for a brighter future, its transformational mission "to educate students for lives of leadership and service in a global society through academic and co-curricular programs of recognized excellence in the liberal arts and in the context of the historic Christian faith."

Hope proceeds with the belief that the education the college provides, a rich mix of intellectual, physical, social and spiritual development, will not only continue but is in fact essential to preparing servant-leader citizens who will play a critical role in shaping for the better a broken world in need.



The situation is particularly acute in Michigan, where unemployment has been among the nation's highest at 15 percent and a \$2.8 billion revenue shortfall has the state anticipating major budget cuts—including, potentially, much of the state scholarship aid on which most of the college's Michigan students depend. At the same time, the value of the college's endowment is down by 20 percent, ancillary income from campus operations such as the conference services program has dropped, and donor support has declined as well (the college landed within \$150,000 of its \$3.3 million goal for the Hope Fund this past year, but the number of donors dropped by nearly eight percent versus 2007-08).

However, it all could be much worse—and it has been worse at other institutions that found themselves less prepared. Yes, Hope had contingency plans in place for campus-specific incidents like the flu—and, as it happens, flood insurance—but crucially, the college had also begun planning for a large-scale economic downturn long before it happened.



Firm Foundation. Hope builds on a strong past, literally as well as figuratively. The recent restoration of Graves Hall assures that the building will meet well the educational needs of the 21st century while celebrating Hope's history.

"Several years ago, the college and the economy were doing well, we had attractive operating surpluses, and we were all quite proud of that and feeling pretty good about where Hope was," recalled Tom Bylsma '86, vice president and chief financial officer at Hope. "What was interesting was when we met with the Board of Trustees, they weren't sharing that enthusiasm. They were more cautionary."

"To their credit, they were quite visionary in this regard," he said.

As a result, Hope began operating in a "stewardship mode" three years ago. By involving members of the entire campus community in identifying ways to reduce spending, the college was able to trim \$1.5 million in operating expenses without taking more drastic measures like cutting programs or releasing employees (although Hope has eliminated the equivalent of seven positions by choosing not to refill some vacancies). Significant savings have come from making choices that reflect good environmental stewardship as well. For example, by taking steps to reduce campus usage of resources such as electricity and water, the college has cut its electric bill by nearly 10 percent and its water use by nearly 20 percent in the past year alone. (A feature on the college's stewardship efforts appears elsewhere in this issue.)

With the economic downturn, the effort intensified this past year. Among other actions, the college froze all faculty and staff salaries at their 2008-09 level for 2009-10.

The cost savings reflect a sensibility that itself originates from the college's student-centered mission: that Hope must keep its costs as low as possible for the families that it serves. Correspondingly, the tuition increases at Hope during the past three years have been well below the average increase enacted by the college's comparison group of some 25 other select liberal arts schools; this year's increase of 2.9 percent was among the lowest in the nation.

For, even while Hope is wrestling with the economy on an institutional level, families and students are experiencing it very personally. Dr. Kristen Gray, assistant dean and director of the college's counseling center, has seen it as she works with students—although Hope students often express their concerns in a way that very much does them credit.

"They want to be helpful to their families, and if they could they would fix what's happening in their families," Dr. Gray said. "So often, our students will talk about concern for their parents and siblings above and beyond what they're worried about for themselves."



Moving Forward. Hope adds facilities not for their own sake, but to enable faculty, staff and students to perform at the very highest levels throughout the college's holistic emphasis on intellectual, physical,

social and spiritual development. The new Van Andel Soccer Stadium also continues the college's part in helping enhance the "eastern gateway" to the city of Holland.

"The thing that I can remember talking about with the students the most was, 'Do I stay in college or leave college?' Then they look at the fact that they have invested in their education," she said. "I really saw them balancing their deep concern for their family and then how they move their education forward in a good way."

The concerns play out very directly in the office of financial aid, which is on the front line as families work to achieve their dream of providing a high-quality Hope education to their sons and daughters. While for many years the majority of Hope students have received need-based aid, the circumstances have been more difficult for families this past year, according to Phyllis Kleder Hooyman '73, director of financial aid.

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— President James Bultman '63

"We've had situations where both parents have lost their jobs, and we've responded to that," Hooyman said.

"We've worked with families that were in dire straits to be able to get them to Hope College, and we have received beautiful notes thanking the college," she said. "The main thing is, if there's a loss of employment people need to talk to us and we'll assess each case individually."

Amidst the challenges, there are signs of hope. Hope proceeds with the belief that the education the college provides, a rich mix of intellectual, physical, social and spiritual development, will not only continue but is in fact essential to preparing servant-leader citizens who will play a critical role in shaping for the better a broken world in need.

It's a difference that families recognize. Hope started the new school year with its second-largest enrollment ever, 3,230 students, down just eight from last year's high, which had included Hope's largest graduating class. The total includes 803 new students—three above the college's goal.

"The bottom line is, we have a full class this year," Hooyman said. "That's great news. Families were able to come and we helped them come. Here's the worst economic crisis in decades, and we have a full class."

Hope is looking ahead to continue to serve students well for years to come, and is moving ahead despite the uncertainties of the age. Hope improved campus facilities this fall through the restoration of Graves Hall and the addition of the Van Andel Soccer Stadium. The college and city of Holland have recently partnered a trade for two small parcels along

Columbia Avenue, providing space for future development in the central campus.

Determining the steps that will help keep Hope strong into the future is an ongoing process, blending both long-term strategic planning and responsiveness to changes in immediate circumstance. The college's major goals include building the endowment to help provide additional scholarship aid and to reduce Hope's reliance on tuition to pay annual operating expenses. Hope will also continue to evaluate its facility needs in light of how best to support teaching and facilitate learning.

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Helping to meet the need, and sustaining the Hope that is and creating the Hope that could be, will require the partnership of the entire Hope family. Currently, only 25 percent of the college's 29,000 alumni are contributing to the college. Further, fully 95 percent of the college's gift income is contributed by just five

percent of those who donate to Hope.

Every gift matters. If fewer than half of those who haven't given—say, 10,000 alumni-contributed \$50 each, the college would receive an additional \$500,000 for its work in transforming students' lives.

The economic crisis is of course affecting Hope alumni as well as the families of students, but even in the face of their own challenging circumstances, appreciative alumni and friends have been making a point of providing support, recognizing the difference that Hope made in their lives—and that they in turn can help Hope make in others' lives.

"I had a great experience at Hope and have supported the Hope Fund almost every year since I graduated—through law school and now as I'm repaying student loans," said Amy Fox '95. "This past year, I had to significantly reduce what I contributed to the Hope Fund, and thought about not giving at all. My husband was unemployed for a couple of months and the non-profit organization I work for was facing a financial crisis so I was compelled to direct more of my charitable giving there. But I know that alumni support is so important to the college and want to help other students have a great experience like I did, so even though I gave less, I still did what I could." 🙌



People of Hope. In a year when many institutions have experienced significant enrollment declines, Hope's enrollment is the second-highest ever at 3,230 students. Recognizing that students and families appreciate and desire what Hope has to offer, the college's priorities include limiting costs and building the endowment to help provide additional scholarship aid and reduce Hope's reliance on tuition to pay annual operating expenses.

