

On the cusp of a decade

Anniversaries tend to get celebrated in batches of five or 10. The coming school year will be the 10th at Hope's helm for President James Bultman '63. Rather than mark the occasion in retrospect, we thought we'd anticipate the milestone.

President Bultman's inauguration in 1999 was a return. In addition to being a Hope alumnus, he had been a professor, dean and coach at the college from 1968 to 1985. In between, he was president of Northwestern College in Iowa for 14 years. He has also been active in national higher-education associations, and among other major appointments has just completed an elected term on the Executive Committee of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, where he also served as chair of the Student Financial Aid committee. President Bultman also serves on the executive committee of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Michigan as immediate past chair, and is currently vice chair of the Great Lakes Colleges Association academic consortium.

The reflections which follow concern what has been and what seems likely to come, at Hope as well as in higher education in general.

College presidents live their jobs—in your case that's literally true, since the President's House is in the center of campus, flanked on either side by student residence halls. What motivates you, keeps you excited about the start of each day?

"It's the people. I have the privilege of working with a very talented administrative team, dedicated colleagues on the faculty and



President James Bultman '63 and Martie Tucker '63 Bultman are active participants in the life of the college (here they're shown riding in the Homecoming Parade); on particularly busy evenings in the life of the campus community, they've been known to divide events between them so that they can collectively visit as many as possible. As he enters his 10th year as president, Dr. Bultman is pleased that Hope has been able to add new facilities like the Martha Miller Center for Global Communication, pictured in the background, to enable the college's faculty and students to perform at the highest level as they teach and learn.

staff, and very capable students. And, we have a very supportive constituency.

"In the circles in which I move, Hope is held in very high esteem at both the state and national levels. People are saying about us that 'Hope is clicking on all cylinders,' and that's very satisfying.

"Hope has great people, great programs and great facilities. People are the trump card, but Hope's ability to educate the whole person intellectually, spiritually, socially and physically, and to do it with distinction, is the envy of many. We feel blessed and we're grateful."

As you look back on your nine years here, what have you been most pleased to have seen happen?

"I think I'm probably most pleased with the positive spirit and harmony that exist on campus today. This is a good place and a good time to be at Hope.

"We've recently updated the college's mission statement and developed additional literature concerning the vision that motivates Hope, the core values that shape Hope, the qualities that distinguish Hope,

the virtues that mark conversation at Hope, and the expectations for graduates who are anchored in Hope. All of the materials grew out of conversations involving more than 400 people from both on campus and among our greater constituency, and were unanimously approved in turn by the students, faculty, staff and trustees. The materials are a nice compendium of who we are for people who are or may wish to be aligned with Hope.

"In the circles in which I move, Hope is held in very high esteem at both the state and national levels. People are saying about us that 'Hope is clicking on all cylinders,' and that's very satisfying."

— President James Bultman '63

Even in the short time since the statements have been approved, many people have indicated how much they are pivoting around them in their work at Hope.

"I'm also very pleased, obviously, with the construction of several new facilities that are so heavily used on a daily basis. The science center really enables Hope to maintain and grow a very national reputation in the sciences and enables Hope to do science the Hope way: experientially with faculty and students working collaboratively together. The Martha Miller Center has made a tremendous difference in supporting our emphasis on international and multicultural education while also providing very necessary new homes for modern and classical languages and communication. And, for the first time in 75 years we've had a home arena that we could call our own for basketball."

Looking across 23 years as a college president, do you see different needs and priorities in higher education than two decades ago? What are some ways that Hope has responded?

"Some of the conditions under which we operate today are different than before. I would say that although the cost of higher education has always been of concern, it has a higher profile today than it did before. And that's why I'm really proud that in the last three years Hope has had very modest increases relative to our peers. We've been very serious about trying to hold the line on increasing costs.

"The demographic changes in our society are such that there will be fewer students in our traditional recruiting pool available to us. We are committed to continuing to broaden our recruitment in any case, both because we are called to make Hope an inviting option for all students who desire the college's combination of academic excellence and vibrant faith, and because all of our students will benefit from a college experience that more fully reflects the diversity of our nation and world.

"Expectations of accountability have also increased dramatically—not just from the students and families we serve but also from the state and federal governments, the latter of which are becoming more and more intrusive while providing much less of the revenue stream for higher education.

"On a different level, I think that students are more service-oriented and less self-centered than they were a generation ago. It's always been rewarding to work with young people, but that change in focus has given them exciting new priorities that inspire and challenge us in new ways."

What are some things that you see the college needing to do to be prepared for the challenges ahead?

"Even as we celebrate our successes, much remains to be done. The college has some key needs relative to financial resources and facilities.

"Our current endowment, which seems large at \$160 million, puts us at the bottom of our GLCA comparison group and does not provide enough resources currently to make a big impact overall in keeping us from being tuition-driven. Clearly the music department needs a facility for practice and performance that would do for them what the DeVos Fieldhouse has done for intercollegiate sport. Strong—and gratifying—student interest in living on campus has outstripped the available space. And, ever since the 1980 Van Raalte Hall fire displaced the administrative offices into the DeWitt Student and Cultural Center, our students have lacked the sort of center for co-curricular activities found at virtually every other college and university in the country.

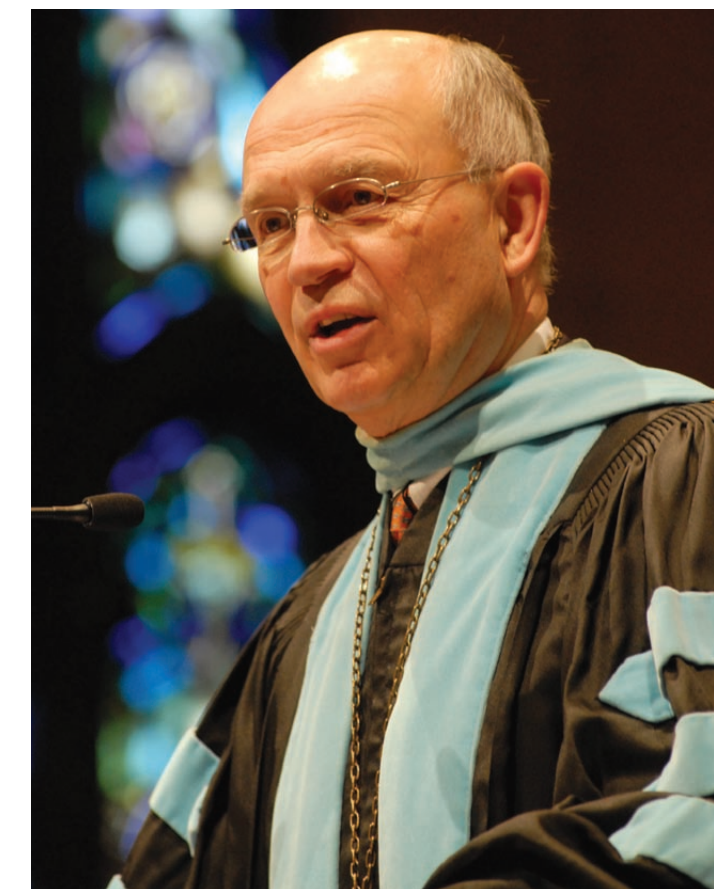
"Those are some of the major needs that we must address in the relatively near future if

we are going to provide the kind of support and space needed to serve students and faculty."

Any thoughts in closing?

"All colleges will need to find their niche in the sea of higher-education opportunities, and I'm very pleased that Hope has found its. Our overall passion is to provide an exceptional education in a caring Christian environment, and my personal passion is that Hope would be at the same time exceptional educationally and vibrantly Christian. That is a path not often traveled by any institution, especially when the Christian dimension is not narrowly defined, prescriptive or parochial. Rather, Hope is ecumenical in nature while rooted in the Reformed Christian faith, and provides opportunities as opposed to requirements.

"We have appreciated the prayers and support of the extended Hope family as they have partnered with us in providing such a rich collegiate experience for our students. Martie and I are grateful for the opportunity to be a part of that partnership and look forward to the future of Hope with great confidence and expectation." 🙏



President Bultman speaks during a formal gathering in Dimment Memorial Chapel. Across his years in higher education he has found Hope unique in its blend of academic excellence and a vibrant Christian dimension that provides opportunities rather than requirements. It's a combination that he believes serves students exceptionally well and that he appreciates partnering with the extended Hope family in helping to provide.

