

2018-19 Report of the President

Kathleen E. Haring



Shortly after assuming the role of interim president, I left on a planned vacation to Europe. The trip was notable in that it allowed me the time to reflect on my now 35 years at Muhlenberg and the charge I assumed to keep the College moving forward. I have always been grateful to be a part of the Muhlenberg community, but during my two weeks away from campus, I realized

how proud I am to be part of such an excellent institution.

Much has changed at the College throughout my time with the institution. The one constant has been the amazing strength and collaborative nature of the Muhlenberg community. In fact, all of the positive changes that have maintained the excellence of the College in an ever-changing world can be traced to the work and support of our faculty, staff, students and alumni. In this President's Report, I want to share with you those things that make me proud to call myself a member of such an impressive community.

Academic Excellence and Innovation

The liberal arts have been under assault for some time now. The loudest noise typically comes from those who have not experienced the extraordinary, lifelong value of an education that is both broad and deep—one that teaches knowledge from across the disciplines and imbues relevant skills. It is true that, in its purest sense, a liberal arts education is not about job training per se, but it provides a way of learning and understanding that opens career pathways and allows graduates to excel in fields across the professional spectrum.

I would argue that this benefit, in and of itself, remains compelling for today's students. But a long time ago, Muhlenberg's faculty and staff recognized that they could offer more to students. From the advent of adult education more than 100 years ago to the addition of pre-professional majors like business in the 1930s, the faculty have sought to combine a traditional liberal arts educa-

tional experience with a forward-looking approach that prepares graduates to successfully pursue any path they choose.

Muhlenberg remains one of the few top national private colleges to offer our students nontraditional liberal arts programs in accounting, business, education, film studies, neuroscience and public health. We also give our students the opportunity to study analytics, documentary storymaking, innovation & entrepreneurship and statistics as minors. We offer these programs within a unique, integrated curriculum that places learning in these majors within a broad liberal arts context, teaching not only the how of each area but, more importantly, the why.

This past year we elevated our sustainability studies minor to a major. Sustainability-related degrees are on the rise, but most of these programs are at larger universities or have more of a science focus. In typical Muhlenberg fashion, we've taken an entirely different path. Our sustainability studies major is an interdisciplinary program—15 academic programs contribute courses to the major—that gives equal focus to environmental, economic and social factors that must be considered to achieve sustainability. The program prepares students for a wide range of possible career pathways, including fieldwork, legal representation, political advocacy and environmental education.

The sustainability studies major underscores one of the most unique and innovative parts of the Muhlenberg curriculum. A liberal arts education is at its best when it incorporates varying perspectives in the pursuit of learning—leading to the prime competencies of critical thinking and the ability to solve complex problems. Most colleges present this kind of interdisciplinary approach through specific programs or clusters of classes. The faculty at Muhlenberg, recognizing the importance of integrative learning (IL), has instituted an IL requirement that ensures each student will not only engage with this kind of study but that they will reflect on their experiences to purposefully recognize the impact of their IL participation. This is a critical component to helping students understand the importance of weighing different perspectives and methodologies as they solve complex problems in both their professional and personal lives.

A prime example of IL learning this year was an experience developed for resident assistants to learn about and understand different religious traditions and help develop an ability to con-



sider issues that arise from religious difference in a more objective way. This kind of opportunity has impacts that extend well beyond this one experience. It helped prepare our resident assistants to work more effectively with religious diversity at the College and to demonstrate, as student leaders, the practices needed within a diverse and inclusive environment.

Another innovation was the introduction of the Shankweiler Scholars pre-medical honors program. But this isn't an ordinary pre-med program. Muhlenberg has a long history of educating health care providers that includes academic partnerships with a number of medical programs. Through conversation, we found that medical schools were craving undergraduates who were not focused solely on the sciences but were trained in humanistic disciplines that gave them the ability to relate with patients more effectively. From these conversations grew the Shankweiler Scholars, which enrolled 16 students this fall.

Supporting Student Success

We've talked often about the changing demographics of students eligible to enter higher education. This shift has resulted in challenging times in recruiting highly qualified students who can succeed in Muhlenberg's rigorous academic environment. While recruitment is critical for the College, it is central to our mission—and embedded in our strategic plan—that we do all we can to ensure that enrolling students are successful once they join our community.

One of the changes we have witnessed in recent years is an increase in the number of first-generation students attending college. This fall, 20 percent of our new students were first generation. Muhlenberg has always been about relationships, and our recruitment efforts are no exception. Because our admissions counselors are truly engaged with our prospective students, it makes navigating the admissions process easier for first-generation students and gives them an understanding the College is committed to their success.

Last year Muhlenberg College became the fourth institution to establish a chapter of Alpha Alpha Alpha, the newly created honor society for first-generation students. This society recog-

nizes the success of these students, who really are trailblazing. Unlike students with family members who have college experience, first-gen students often have to put in the extra effort to seek out the information and contacts they need to fully take advantage of a college education.

A liberal arts education is at its best when it incorporates varying perspectives in the pursuit of learning—leading to the prime competencies of critical thinking and the ability to solve complex problems.

Our First-Year Seminar program is designed to help our students make the transition to Muhlenberg as successful as possible. The writing-intensive courses have been in place since 1993 (see page 30 for more about this year's course offerings) and—unlike first-year seminars at other institutions—are an opportunity for new students, faculty and returning students to learn together. Faculty from across the disciplines choose topics, often not within their area of expertise, that they wish to explore, and students from the writing assistant program work with faculty to help new students learn how to become better writers.

Growing diversity and inclusion is integral to our values and is embedded in our strategic plan. The increasing number of first-generation and Pell-eligible students—students with fewer family financial resources—also creates increased diversity of all kinds. The College has understood the need to support underrepresented students and instituted several initiatives to help these students thrive at the College. Developed in 2011, Emerging Leaders (EL) is an outstanding cohort program that offers students from underrepresented populations a seminar and a series of workshops focused on leadership and transition. EL has a pre-orientation program and this year added community building and co-curricular opportunities, as well as a new student-led leadership team to support their work. We also have



a gender-inclusive working group made up of faculty, staff and students that has been focused on making the Muhlenberg campus a welcoming and supportive environment for LGBTQ members of our community.

This fall, the College launched a number of initiatives to provide resources for students experiencing financial hardship. Financial hardship comes in many forms and can affect anyone on our campus. A student may need supplies for class or they may be on campus when the Wood Dining Commons is closed and need food. Studies show that the monetary difference between a student being able to thrive or fall behind can be \$500 or less. The most visible of our efforts is the M.U.L.E. Community Cabinet (see page 7 for more), a student-run pantry that provides a range of donated goods, including classroom supplies, food and hygiene products. We also put an experiential learning grant program in place to help students cover costs associated with off-campus opportunities and a student emergency grant fund for unexpected and urgent needs.

Opening Doors

The liberal arts have always been a pathway to professional success. Time and again, studies like the 2018 Hart Research survey report “Fulfilling the American Dream: Liberal Education and the Future of Work” demonstrate the confidence that the business and nonprofit world has in liberal arts graduates. That’s why Muhlenberg has recently taken considerable steps to improve both the depth and engagement of our Career Center and The Muhlenberg Network.

Over the last few years, Muhlenberg has invested in an expanded Career Center, which has yielded a host of extraordinary programs that give our students and alumni a chance to connect and network in ways the College has never offered before. The Career Road Trip, launched in 2016, takes Muhlenberg students to places like New York City, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. to visit organizations, gain insight into various industries and network with alumni. The trips, which can include tours, panel discussions and networking events, provide an opportunity for students to explore career pathways and often lead to internships or even post-graduation positions.

The Muhlenberg Network has also expanded, providing opportunities for alumni. Alumni serve as mentors, provide internships and job-shadow opportunities, as well as volunteer with a variety of programs. The Career Center to Go program sends staff to various regions to work with alumni seeking to change or advance their careers. We have also added lifelong learning opportunities such as faculty-led classes during Alumni Weekend and an online alumni reading group. And there is TheMuhlenbergNetwork.com, a professional online community that has grown in just a few short years to more than 3,400 members.

We offer students an opportunity to work on research that is typically seen at the graduate level as a way of deepening learning and providing pathways for student success.

Alumni Week is one of the most impressive efforts in connecting our students with alumni. What began as a program offered by the Department of Media & Communication in 2011 has expanded to include 17 academic departments with more than 170 alumni participants in 2019. Each spring, alumni come back to campus to meet with students, share stories of their career paths and offer advice—and sometimes professional opportunities—in classrooms, on panels and through networking events.





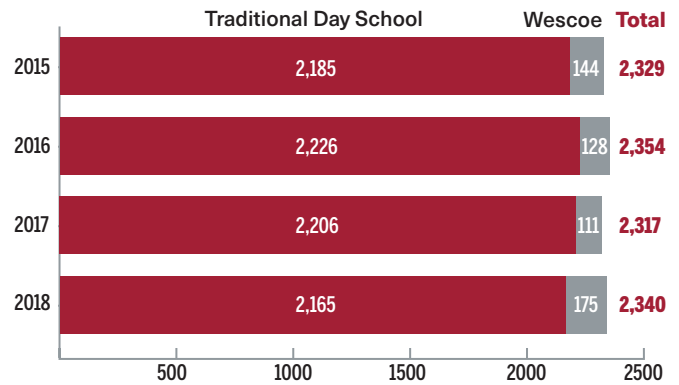
One of the most important takeaways for me from Alumni Week is the deep connection that alumni continue to feel with their faculty mentors. Many of those relationships began and developed as part of completing research work while students. Like many top liberal arts institutions, we offer students an opportunity to work on research that is typically seen at the graduate level as a way of deepening learning and providing pathways for student success. What makes Muhlenberg unique is our Summer Research Program. For about 20 years now, the College has given grants to support students who remain on campus over the summer and conduct research under the guidance of our faculty. There are many things I look forward to at Muhlenberg, but perhaps the one I enjoy most is the students' fall presentation of their summer research. During Alumni Weekend this year, we saw a record 81 students present the results of research conducted with 34 faculty across 16 academic departments. Truly impressive!

For me, the definition of an elite college is outstanding students, faculty, staff and alumni doing amazing things, things that continue to push us and challenge our perceptions. Every time I read stories in *Muhlenberg Magazine* or talk to members of the community about what they are doing, I am taken by an incredible sense of pride: Pride that the College that has been a part of my life for 35 years provides so many opportunities. Pride at the impact our students, faculty, staff and alumni have on their communities and the world around us. Pride that after all these years, Muhlenberg is still teaching me new things.



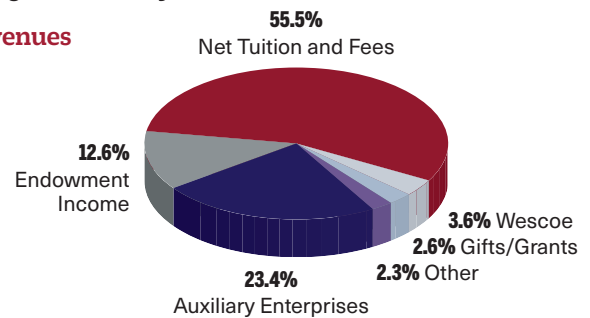
2018-19 BY THE NUMBERS

Total Fall Enrollment

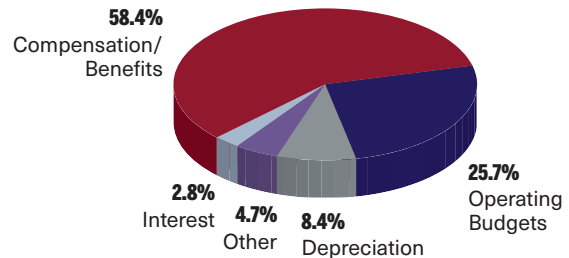


Budget Summary

Revenues



Expenditures



Endowment Summary

