

Gaining Ground on Many Fronts... President's Report October 2015

To know Christ, and make Him known.

It has been a busy season since our board meeting in April. You will find there have been many new initiatives and others are now in the planning. At the same time, we continue on our mission of providing excellent education in a healthy environment that is grounded Biblically.

We are off to an excellent school year with a happy campus of engaged students and staff. I am amazed at the strength of our student body and the leadership in it. God has given us a deep well of talent to draw on this year. It is a delight to work with Nathan Rooke and have him helping tackle projects with us.

We have 280 students, very nearly equally split between new students and returning. This is up from 273 last fall, but lower than the 300 that we had been hoping for.

On the personal side, we enjoyed getting Deborah, our middle daughter, married to Andrew Wood. What a great party, lots of fun and friendship. Jocelyn, our oldest, and Brad Leenstra have announced their expected arrival of a baby in early February. And we are enjoying having Charlotte, our youngest, at home, in her second year of nursing at Prairie. We are a blessed family.

The following is an executive summary that will prepare you for discussion at our upcoming board meeting at the end of October.

Major events this year:

Prairie College – Our new school name under the corporate umbrella of Prairie Bible Institute, has been launched with solid support (along with a couple notes of concern).

As you remember, following Board approval in April 2015, we moved all three of our schools into "Prairie College". We based this decision on two cornerstones:

- One simple name that can reasonably represent the whole of our programs (Bible, nursing, aviation, etc.) and
- A name that has the ability to travel more easily into countries that might be difficult to access.

In other words, this name better serves our mission of training people to help meet the greatest needs of the world while still holding to our core value of Bible-centered training and continuing to honour our heritage.

We were recognized in early February as a “2015 Best Christian Workplace,” a testimony to the harmony we are enjoying as a team as we live and work well together.

Strategic Focus on Transformational Education – The Management Team spent a day with Phil Orazi, an executive with Chick-fil-A. Phil walked us through a case study of Chick-fil-A and then helped us apply those principles to Prairie. Our conclusions were that we believe we have solid programs, in an excellent setting... but we need to figure out how to tell our story so we are not such a “well-kept secret.” We have been crafting new language around our model of transformational education and will be presenting that during our Board meeting.

Current developments:

Full coverage of the Scriptures – Our new curriculum, which we launched in September, will have every four-year student study the entire Canon (all 66 books of the Bible) during their degree program. We believe this will help us move toward our objective “to be known for excellence in Bible education.”

Other program modifications:

- Explore, our Outdoor Leadership program, has been successfully relocated to the Canadian Rockies, just west of Rocky Mountain House, Alberta.
- We have moved the Bible courses up to the first semester of the Nursing and EMT programs, following the formula that has worked very well for our Aviation program.
- Music & Worship Arts, under the direction of Brian Doerksen, has moved into its second year. Brian is thinking about making this a three year program with the first year providing an on-ramp to the concentrated two-year program.

New Theology Faculty Member – Dr. Ray Yeo is planning to arrive with his family in November and will start teaching in January. He is talented, well trained, and a global citizen – a solid addition to our team. In a period of difficult access to visas in Canada, his visa came through in record time. His story is one of answered prayer and we thank God for him.

Prison-based Bible College – As a result of our meeting with Prison Fellowship Canada in May and subsequent conversations, we, in partnership with PFC, hope to launch our inaugural class in the Bowden Penitentiary in January, which we understand will be the first of its type in Canada. We will need about \$3,000 in scholarships for each student to cover the annual costs of the program (\$45,000 to \$60,000 depending on whether we have 15 or 20 students).

Global Social Justice Major – Our consultation in July has resulted in plans to launch this as a four-year major, part of the Bachelor of Arts in Intercultural Studies degree program.

Fast-Track Aviation Training – We are in discussions with MAF Canada hoping to have them designate Prairie as one of their preferred training locations. This would require that our training would conform to their protocols. This would help our students qualify to fly with MAF when they have as few as 250 hours, down from about 1,000 hours four years ago.

Sharing faculty – we are in the early stages of discussion with three other schools about sharing professors. The model would have each school offer one course that is digitally delivered to the other three partners (contribute one course, get three courses back).

E-Learning – We continue to launch fresh courses onto our e-Learning platform. Glenn Loewen has set some ambitious goals for this year (launch 20 new courses onto the platform) and is hoping we will figure out how to share course libraries with other schools.

Seminary Education – We are discussing the practical steps toward offering Masters degree programs on our campus.

“The Lion’s Roar” – Our chapel series this semester, is a walk through the Minor Prophets, hearing their cry for justice. This is interestingly coincidental with our launch of the Global Social Justice major.

Hosting the Willowcreek Leadership Summit – This will be our first year to host the Summit on campus.

It seems that God moved among our investors this past year, because they really stepped up to help us out... overall donation revenue grew by more than 40%.

Financial Management – We are turning our focus to three investment funds, inviting donors to join us as co-investors, pooling our collective resources to provide the foundation for training students to meet the greatest needs of the world.

- Education Fund – a most worthy long-term investment in students
- Campus Rejuvenation Fund – to continue our campus renovation
- Program Development Fund – to provide stronger training

Funding for scholarships – Historically, we have offered scholarships and bursaries that, in fact, have been discounts, not funded scholarships. This year we will have fully funded our scholarships, putting the school in a much stronger financial position.

Matching grants – As you know we were offered two matching grants that total \$450,000 split between the Education (\$250,000) and Campus Rejuvenation (\$200,000) funds. We have raised more than \$400,000 toward matching these grants.

Campus Planning / Capital Campaign – Nathan Rooke has been leading us forward in thinking through our long term needs as a campus. We are in the early stages of research, with the aid of the Barna Research Group. The next stage will be to align our facility needs with our mission, at which point we will be able to develop a whole-campus plan. The very likely conclusion of this exercise will be a capital campaign which will be necessary to build a platform for the next phase of the school's life.

Prayer – We continue in our commitment to prayer, collectively (each Wednesday morning plus one day each semester and one in the summer), as well as in our various departments. We are grateful for your partnership with us in your week of prayer & fasting each month. We believe our work of preparing people to meet the greatest needs of the world is so important we dare not engage in it without the bulwark of prayer supporting us and protecting the students. Thank you.

In conclusion, I believe there is no time like now to be in prayer about these many developments. Pray for discernment in decision-making, for the success of our partners, and for us, that we will continue to be a place that faithfully opens the Scriptures for our students and provides an environment for their souls to grow.

As you can see, we have much for which to be thankful. We are grateful for your partnership with us as we seek to know Christ, and make Him known. We are on this mission together and we want to thank you for the vital part you are playing in it.

Yours truly,

Mark

Mark L. Maxwell
President