

Poised...
President's Board Report
Prairie College

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose..." (Romans 8:28)

Ready, Set...Grow!? – For a few years I have felt that we are ready for growth, specifically growth in student numbers. But the fact is that our enrollment numbers have not responded the way I thought they would. Maybe we needed to clean up multiple issues from our past. Maybe we needed to prepare the school's foundation for this growth. Maybe growth will be the story of the next chapter in our history. I am hoping that chapter starts this fall because it feels like we are poised for growth.

Of this we are certain:

- That we are better prepared for growth now than we have been since Elaine and I arrived eight years ago. He has provided a platform that is healthy, stable and united.
- That God provides the growth and we look to Him for guidance on what we should be doing next.
- That we do not want to go ahead in our own effort. As we sense God directing, we move: we do not want to move ahead without Him leading us forward.
- That we are very blessed by the Most High, and have much for which to give Him thanks.

I. Our mission and mandate is clear...

The importance of our work, preparing people with a solid foundation in Biblical truth who will then go out to help meet the greatest needs in the world, is pressed upon us daily by the great needs of the world and by the affirmation of our partners. We are called to be, and invite others to be, lovers of the Almighty, our Creator.

II. Our Core Values are set...

Several years ago, we identified our Core Values to be Bible-based, Christ-centered, Discipleship-directed, and Mission-mandated. We continue to have these as the cornerstones of the College, as illustrated by our reshaping our curriculum to include 7 courses that cover the entire Canon that are taken by every degree-earning student.

III. Our team is ready...

Our staff and faculty have been working well together for several years now. The feeling of cross-campus support is evident as all gather together to pray for each other, to work together on common objectives and to build a school of strong programs. We have been adding to our team carefully, hoping to find franchise-builders who can help carry us forward.

Best Christian Workplaces – BCWI has given us their top rating again, observing that we have been an outlier on both ends of the spectrum, from one of their lowest rated colleges 12 years

ago to one of their highest rated colleges of all time. Our score this year was 4.28, up from our previous score of 4.01 (any score above 4.00 is considered a “Best Christian Workplace”). Most interesting to them has been our faculty, whose level of engagement in our mission scores about 25% above the industry. In some ways, the BCWI score is a 360 review of the leadership team, and I think we have an amazing leadership team. Without any doubt, it is a reflection of the health and welfare of the culture of the organization. We thank God for the path of harmony and mission that He has us working on together.

Faculty – We thank God for our talented and dedicated faculty who provide premium leadership across the campus. Our high bar of attracting practitioner-profs who are talented teachers means that we are trying to attract people from the top end of the talent pool. We hope that they are attracted by the importance of our mission as well as our healthy culture. It is apparent that our pay structure is our largest challenge to filling these spots. We still have the following key positions to fill:

- Youth Ministry professor to replace Al Mertes
- Music & Worship Arts professor (song-writing specialty) to replace Brian Doerksen
- International Business professor/program leader to launch the new program in 2019

Totally Committed – In many ways, our staff and faculty are our most generous group of supporters. The majority of them give financially, and our goal is to take that up to 100%. But this is only a portion of their giving. Each of them has chosen to work here, has chosen to enjoy working here, and has chosen to work for a level of pay that is between 30% and 50% below what they could make elsewhere. Most of them have been approached with options to work somewhere else (some multiple times), and yet they have chosen to stay here, with us, on this mission of training young people to meet the greatest needs of the world. These are “the called.” We need them, and we salute them.

IV. Our supporting publics are ready...

- **Donors** have stepped in to help repair the campus and cover the costs of new program development. Their contribution is critical to delivery of excellent schooling at good prices.
- **Pray-ers** have been critical to the progress we have seen. It is very common to have someone come into our offices... “Just stopping by to pray for you.” And even more common to have someone tell us that we are on their daily prayer list. Let me repeat – this work by these people is critical to all that has happened over the past 10 years and will be critical for our success in the next century.
- **Partners** have continued to join our work, making us better, stronger, and helping keep the cost of training down. In the past year, we have formalized agreements with MAFC (to manage PATC), Alberta Baptist Association (to be “their” college), Stone Church, BC (to provide the courses for their “church-based college”), and we now have two prisons that have opened their doors to us. We have germinating conversations with another denomination and two major international mission agencies about working together

(one for delivery of our online schooling into Asia and the other for the development our International Business program).

V. *Our programs are ready...*

Our goal has been for each program to have two components that make it unique and better: an external partner and an international learning leg. These two distinctives provide practical connection to a. real world experience; and b. real needs around the world. For many years, we have been developing these components. By now we are a little more than half way “there” and the results are suggesting that students appreciate the experience and complete their programs better prepared to work and serve in the real world.

Students continue to affirm our direction, especially spiritually, and we find great joy in seeing their transformation into adulthood as confident and capable people who will help shape nations and change the world. Working with students is investing in 40-year working assets. If we can help set them on the right course, the returns are exponential.

Now we need to tell the world about our great programs and partners!

VI. *Our Marketing and Enrolment is getting ready...*

Now that our programs and people are strong and functioning well, we need to figure out how to tell our story, and we are working on that.

Al Mertes has assumed the lead role as Managing Director of both Enrolment and Marketing bringing a sales-oriented culture to the campus. He is implementing a series of strategic and tactical changes that include a freshened up look for our wheatsheaf logo, new videos, brand-building swag, and a count-down of events leading up to the arrival of new students in the fall. We have just completed three months of near record applications in each month. If we can successfully transition those people onto campus, we could be looking at a very solid first-year enrolment in this fall.

As you are likely aware, we have been developing new channels for distribution to complement our traditional ***on-campus training***.

- ***Online Training*** – our development of the courses for three full online degrees is nearly complete, so we will begin promoting this much more aggressively, as well as seeking strategic partners who will help us with this delivery.
- ***Prison Inmate Training*** – we are now offering classes in two penitentiaries (Bowden and Drumheller) and are in touch with three or four more as potential locations for inmate training. We feel compelled to respond positively to every opportunity because of the open doors and level of interest. The challenge we will face is providing scholarship funding for these students.
- ***Church-based Training*** – many churches are building church-based colleges that provide relevant and low-cost training to church members. Our hope is to partner with churches who want to do this in a way that we provide the course content (through our online

courses) and they provide the local context and community. We think this is a win for the church, for the student, and for the college.

VII. *Our campus facilities are not ready...*

We can live with the facilities we have, for a short time longer. But, in the past few months I have realized that to remain static in our facilities is going to compromise our mission. Three buildings need to come down, hopefully this summer. We need to continue with the renovation and upgrades of several buildings that are still solid, and we need to begin planning toward a new dining room/kitchen, auditorium. We also need better community space that would provide a welcome center for the campus.

It is our opinion that our facilities do not reflect the caliber of our people, nor our programs, nor the importance of our mission. And we think when we bring our buildings up to the standard we expect in our classroom, we will find students rising to the call to join us on our quest to prepare people to meet the greatest needs of the world.

This leads us to conclude that we think we will need to begin a major capital campaign, soon. We think our mission is worthy of this work.

Poised... and in prayer – We believe that the good report that follows is a direct result of answers to prayer...our prayer as a team, together with your prayer on our behalf. Thank you for your investments of time and money, and especially for your prayer, in the work that God is doing here.

To know Christ, to live in the power of His name, and to make Him known,

Mark

Mark L. Maxwell, President
April 12, 2018