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**Focal Point 1 -- AFFIRMATION**

As members of the Messiah community, we have the privilege and the responsibility of nurturing a campus culture that is characterized by the affirmation of the pursuit of excellence and the affirmation of the unique giftedness of our employees and students.

To pursue excellence, we must remain keenly aware of and committed to the mission and heritage of Messiah College. Our rootedness in Anabaptist, Pietist, and Wesleyan theological streams has shaped our foundational values and our core commitments. Our embracing spirit has enabled us to create a campus ethos that is profoundly Christian but not overly doctrinaire. We are a faith-based college that seeks to educate and facilitate the intellectual, spiritual, and personal development of our students. We all know that we are living in complex and chaotic times, and we must prepare our students for a knowledge based economy and a religiously and culturally diverse world. Education that is holistic that nurtures the life of the mind and the soul – education that is inclusive of the liberal and applied arts and sciences is essential to enabling students to understand the similarities and differences among people and to develop capacities to bring people together to solve complex problems. The type of education we are seeking to provide at Messiah involves risk and courage on the part of educators and students. As we explore controversial issues and difficult questions – we often find ourselves in the situation of having to explain and defend our educational approach to the broader constituency. But we know that learning can only occur in the context of a community where people affirm and trust each other, and every one of you plays a vital role in creating that learning environment for our students.

Therefore, to affirm our institutional identity and commitment to educational

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environment that offers challenge, reward and fulfillment. In the midst of financial constraints, we will do our best to insure that employees receive competitive wage and benefits and that there are adequate funds for professional development including faculty scholarship. Toward that end, I have asked the Human Resources department to prioritize a review of the job classification and salary structure of our employee base to insure that we are meeting the compensation goals as stated in *The Centennial Plan*. I will also be sponsoring a December Open Door Day that will be dedicated to the issue of the impact of recent changes in employee benefits. Finally, the Provost has indicated he will be working with the Gender Concerns Committee and the Micah Partnership to seek to assess the difficulties some employees encounter when they relocate to Messiah. I am convinced that we need to implement tangible means of assisting colleagues and their families through challenging transitions.

In addition to recruiting and retaining employees, we must also recruit and retain students. This year, we are expecting a first-year class that is larger than last year's (an increase of 33 students), but as you know, we did not meet our enrollment target for the fall semester. A comprehensive review of our recruitment practices, tuition pricing, financial aid, and institutional marketing is currently being conducted. An enrollment target for Fall 2006 will be established and communicated following the completion of that review. I want to acknowledge the dedication and diligence of our Enrollment Management team and the need for all of us to assist with recruitment. Our willingness to participate in Open Houses, to telephone prospective students, to welcome guests when they are visiting campus, and to enthusiastically speak about the value of a Messiah education is critical to achieving full enrollment.

We must be as totally committed to retention as we are to recruitment. The information we will glean from the upcoming campus-wide program reviews and from seriously analyzing student assessment data should instruct us regarding our strengths and areas which need improvement. Identifying and addressing those outcomes will certainly be important to maintaining a strong rate of student retention and to insuring excellence throughout every area of the College.

Beyond affirming our intention to pursue excellence, we must also find ways to affirm and recognize individuals for their unique contributions. Kind words and notes of encouragement need to be the norm not the exception for our community. College-sponsored times for employee recognition and enjoyment will be scattered throughout this calendar year. In October, we are planning a community-wide celebration for the presidential inauguration. All employees and students are invited, and I hope you will join me as we honor Messiah's remarkable past and promising future.

As President, I will be w

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To be a campus where conversation richly and naturally abides, we must first create a welcoming environment. Asbury Seminary professor Christine Pohl defines a welcoming community as a “place rich with stories, rituals, and a history. It is valued and it nurtures life. It is never simply a physical space but a place alive with commitments and relationships.” When we live in community, we tell each other our personal stories – we share perspectives and hospitality (the act of genuine caring and respect for others) – has a transforming effect – not toward unanimous agreement but toward deepened understanding. When we seek to live as a hospitable community, we recognize the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. that ours is a “network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.”

Healthy conversations will require frequent opportunities for internal communication. The President’s Office will continue to publish quarterly e-mail Presidential Updates in addition to sponsoring Open Door Days, Pizza with the President events in the Residence Halls, an All-Night Study Break at the President’s Residence for students during finals week, and meetings with alumni in various regions throughout the nation. Campus leadership will initiate conversations within and between Schools, divisions, departments and with various student constituencies. Attentive listening is essential to meaningful conversation, and all of us must seek to listen with empathy.

Messiah also has a significant responsibility to provide leadership to conversations with community partners and the broader Academy. This year the Student Affairs Division will be sponsoring campus-wide discussions during a series of issue-themed weeks. School initiatives, Presidential Scholar Lectures, and other academic forums initiated by faculty members will bring experts to our campus to provoke and challenge the thinking of students and employees. These forums present us with a marvelous opportunity to demonstrate that we are a Christian academic community that possesses firm convictions while humbly seeking to understand and learn from differing perspectives. Faculty and educator involvement with professional conferences, publishing, and performing provide the opportunity for Messiah to influence the

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much about my white privilege and about the painful and emotionally draining challenges my brothers and sisters of color experience every day at Messiah and in the local central Pennsylvania community. I am deeply disturbed by the lack of hospitality some members of our community experience and I mourn missed opportunities to educate our students for a global, multicultural, twenty-first century world because we have not been willing to address our own prejudices and ethno centrism. Dr. Lawrence Burnley, our newly appointed Associate Dean for Multicultural Affairs, is a

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Many of you have seen the latest edition of the *USNews* Rankings – Messiah remains in the top five in our category of Northern Comprehensive Colleges – but Grove City College moved ahead to third place – leading Messiah in the rankings by one point. The rankings which are based on 2004 data indicate that we improved in the categories of average class size, freshman retention rate and graduation rate but lost ground in categories such as acceptance rate, student selectivity, and average alumni giving. Obviously there are many limitations to the parameters of these rankings, but they do highlight some of the challenges we need to address – not to improve our ranking but to fulfill our commitment to institutional excellence. We must be articulate and intentional about making a persuasive case for the value of a Messiah education. Our commitment to assessing student and program outcomes and sharing those outcomes through an intentional, coherent external communication strategy is essential to Messiah’s future!

On the financial front, our challenge is simple to describe but difficult to realize. We must seek to control (and sometimes) reduce expenses while increasing revenue. Because of the excellent effort expended by all of you, we will end the FY05 year with a positive operating balance despite a projected budget deficit. (I will communicate specifics following the final report from our auditors.) This outcome was achieved because of three factors: 1) sound fiscal management by budget directors; 2) a record year in giving – thank you to the Development team and all who have assisted us or been donors. The Campaign total is currently \$48.8 million, and we are aggressively working to achieve the \$50 million goal by the end of the calendar year; and, 3) a positive return on endowment income. We must seek to produce a similar outcome for FY06, understanding that less than full enrollment poses a challenge for us from the outset. One of my priorities as president is to be actively involved in fundraising. Building positive relationships with alumni and increasing Messiah’s national profile (expanding our base – recruitment of students and donors/trustees, seek scholars of national reputation, develop of a national marketing campaign) are two strategies which are essential to generating increased revenue and insuring a firm financial foundation. I will be spending a significant amount of my time working alongside the Development team as we seek to find the necessary resources to support our institutional mission and objectives.

For the second year, the Institutional Planning and Finance Subcommittee of the College Council will provide oversight to the implementation of a connected, coherent approach to p

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