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"Pulling Together" | Augustana College

2004 Report from the President

Steven C. Bahls, President of Augustana College

When I speak with students, I am fond of urging them to delve beyond their comfort zones. Recently, one of our students turned the tables on me—he urged my wife, Jane, and me to get outside our comfort zones by rowing with the Augustana crew team on the Mississippi River. After some initial hesitation, we took him up on it. We joined several other faculty and staff members for a beautiful September afternoon of rowing on the Mississippi.

The crew consisted of eight people—six were novices and two were student members of the team. The “captain” of a rowing shell is called a coxswain. All eight rowers face aft toward the coxswain who, alone, faces forward. The coxswain has the responsibility not only to guide the shell, but also to make sure the members of the crew are rowing together, using their energy in the most efficient way possible—no small task with both experienced and novice rowers. The coxswain is also responsible for keeping up the morale of the crew as a race ebbs and flows. If the coxswain is not successful and the shell drifts off-course by so much as one degree, the boat can be disqualified. Since no member of the crew can see the direction in which their shell is going, the amount of trust the crew needs to place in the coxswain is extraordinary. But thanks to the skill and enthusiasm of our coxswain and the patience of our student rowers, we as a crew were able to pick up speed and row together for an exhilarating trip past Arsenal Island.

I don't mind confessing some relief when we stepped onto the dock. It was hard work! But I as left the boathouse of the Quad City Rowing Association—which graciously shares its facilities with Augustana's students—I couldn't help but think about the similarities between those who strive to advance Augustana and the crew and coxswain of our shell. Some are experienced, but some are novices. Some bring leadership, others bring strength. Some are seated facing forward with a crisp view of what's ahead, others propel us by investing their exertions in a trusted vision. We all need to work in harmony to advance the College for our students.

Who are the coxswains of Augustana College? Who are the members of the loyal crew? All of the persons for whom this report was prepared serve vital roles in our endeavor. Our faculty guide our students as they grow in mind, spirit and body. Our coaches and student-life professionals maintain athletic and enrichment programs that are unparalleled in their quality and impact. Our trustees and the College's administration ensure that Augustana's resources are properly employed in support of our mission. And our friends and alumni, through their support and vision, help us to create and sustain programs that keep Augustana strong for our students.

When we all pull together, remarkable things happen. Here are some examples which I've found particularly impressive:

- It is one thing for a college president to say that the institution's faculty members are fully invested in students; it is another thing to ask, critically, whether they transform students. At Augustana, there is sound

evidence to think that they do so. Only 33 percent of first-year students come to college wanting to influence social values. At Augustana, that number more than doubles by the time they are seniors, to 68 percent. Fifty-four percent of our incoming students report a desire to help others in difficulty, but that figure increases to 84 percent by the time they are seniors. Only 22 percent of new students, when they come here, have the objective of helping promote racial understanding. That percentage nearly triples by their senior year. And of particular significance, they want to be leaders in doing so. Twenty-seven percent of our first-year students say they want to be community leaders. By the time they graduate, that figure more than doubles to 63 percent. These are remarkable increases, and I believe they are directly tied to the commitment of our faculty to helping students prepare for lives of “leadership and service in a diverse and changing world.”

- While the administrative team at many schools might be complacent about the solid record of success Augustana has enjoyed, the administrative team at this college has been active over the last year in working with the faculty to develop an ambitious strategic plan—one which will advance Augustana into the top ranks of American liberal arts colleges. With a small resource base, this administrative team has invested much “sweat equity” for the benefit of our students.
- Most inspiring to me are the efforts of our alumni and friends. Our board of trustees has a vision for Augustana as a premiere liberal arts college. Board members invest valuable time and resources and set a high bar in challenging all to invest in the College’s success. I’ve been impressed with the countless alumni and friends who have made these investments in a uniformly selfless way. When two alumni had a vision for a first-class baseball facility, they provided the funds so that a long-held dream of the College could become a reality. Other alumni, concerned about the accessibility of quality higher education, have endowed scholarships. Still others, moved by gratitude for the impact faculty have had on their lives, have helped preserve Augustana’s ability to attract and retain a world-class faculty by endowing chairs and professorships. Countless others, including younger alumni who may not have great financial means, have faithfully supported our annual fund. We are deeply grateful to our graduates, whose concern for the life of the College gives Augustana an alumni participation rate which is higher than the average participation rate for Ivy League institutions. Their investments in Augustana give us the margin of excellence our students enjoy.

The efforts of alumni, friends, faculty and staff have not gone unnoticed by the people we endeavor to serve. For the current academic year, we received a record 3,083 applications for admission, which is a six percent increase over last year’s record total. Both the median ACT score (26) and mean high school grade-point average (3.62) continue to be at their highest. These trends can only serve to strengthen Augustana’s enrollment, which now stands at 2,266 students from 31 states and 24 nations.

This report is offered in a spirit of profound gratitude for all of the people who keep Augustana swift and on course. Whether providing the muscle and endurance of those who row, or the leadership and encouragement of those who sit in the coxswain’s seat, we are all pulling together for the common good: helping our students grow in mind, spirit and body. On behalf of Augustana College, I am pleased to offer thanks to all of the members of our grand crew for charting and daring a course of excellence.



Accounting	Communication Studies	Geography	Music	Pre-Optometry
Africana Studies	Computer Science	Geology	Music Education	Pre-Pharmacy
Anthropology	Creative Writing	German Studies	Music Performance	Pre-Physical Therapy
Art	Economics	Greek	Neuroscience	Pre-Physician Assistant
Art History	Elementary Education	Graphic Design	Non-Profit Leadership	Pre-Seminary
Asian Studies	Engineering	History	Development	Pre-Veterinary Medicine
Biochemistry	Engineering Physics	International Business	Philosophy	Psychology
Biology	English (Literature)	Japanese	Physics	Religion
Business Administration	English (Writing)	Landscape Architecture	Political Science	Scandinavian Studies
Chemistry	Environmental Management	Latin	Pre-Dentistry	Secondary Education
Chinese	& Forestry	Library and Information	Pre-Law	Sociology
Classics	Environmental Studies	Science	Pre-Medicine	Sociology (Social Welfare)
Communication Sciences	Ethics	Mathematics	Pre-Music Therapy	Spanish
& Disorders	French	Multimedia Journalism	Pre-Nursing	Theatre
		& Mass Communication	Pre-Occupational Therapy	Women's & Gender Studies