



2015 State of the College Address

Virginia Wesleyan College

President Scott D. Miller

August 18, 2015

Good afternoon! Welcome to the 2015 State of the College Address, and my first opportunity to meet with you formally as we look ahead to the coming academic year at Virginia Wesleyan College.

Annie and I thank you for the warm and gracious Wesleyan welcome we have received from all of you. It is a testament to the caring community that Virginia Wesleyanites enjoy that our first weeks with you have been exceptionally productive, most kind, and very exciting. We are thrilled to be here and very much feel a part of the Wesleyan Family!

Let me offer my special appreciation and gratitude to Gary Bonnewell, Chair of the Board of Trustees, and David Kaufmann, Vice Chair of the Board and Chair of the Presidential Search Committee, for their guidance, confidence, and new friendship in these early weeks. Several of our Board members are here this afternoon. Thank you for coming and for all you do for the College. All of us are grateful for your service. Thank you, Presidential Transition Team, for your professionalism in welcoming a new president. And thank you, everyone, for your patience as we introduce and reintroduce ourselves several times! We look forward to learning from you and working with you.

To Dr. Greer...thank you for 23 outstanding years as president and for your special contributions to a smooth transition. We honor your service.

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Much like our new students, whose journey to college is both exciting and a little filled with anxiety, I left our West Virginia home of the past eight years, drove 400 miles to a place where we knew very few people, moved in to a campus residence hall—Broyles Hall—(for 10 days) and started a new experience. Much as our new students will find, here I am several weeks later with many new friends enjoying the Virginia Wesleyan experience.

Before I began my tenure on July 1, I read numerous Virginia Wesleyan publications and documents, and spent a great deal of time learning all I could about the College from many sources. Early on, I developed a very favorable opinion of the College. Now that I have actually arrived and have been immersed in all that is Virginia Wesleyan for seven weeks, I must tell you—I AM IMPRESSED.

We have a beautiful campus in a fantastic location. Our buildings, grounds, and housekeeping staff deserve our praise for keeping the campus in first-rate shape.

I'm impressed with the Jane P. Batten Student Center, which is a comprehensive, multi-purpose facility unmatched among private liberal arts colleges in this region. It is beautiful, functional, and well-operated. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jane Batten for her tremendous loyalty, leadership, generosity and friendship to Virginia Wesleyan College. She has positively touched and impacted every aspect of this College and this campus.

The many bright, talented people I've met throughout the campus community have impressed me with their knowledge, dedication, and commitment to Virginia Wesleyan.

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In the world of business, it is often said that location is everything. When I moved to rural West Virginia eight years ago, very few friends or relatives called to say they were coming to assist with the move. When we announced this year's move to Norfolk/Virginia Beach, however, friends and family came out of the woodwork to offer assistance, and many have found reason to come back several weeks in a row! In fact, a college teammate whom I have seen just once in 34 years even offered to come and spend the week helping!

Our beautiful location does recommend us to those seeking a distinctive educational experience. But in higher education today, it takes more than a fabulous campus address to fill each new freshman class.

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Colleges and universities today are facing unprecedented challenges. Demographic changes, rising costs, new technologies, and increased competition compel us to develop innovative strategies to leverage opportunities. After nearly 25 years in the higher-education presidency, I have never seen such ferocious competition among colleges and universities, such high degrees of expectations by our student consumers, and such exacting demands for affordability, accessibility, and accountability. Technology is remaking our classroom experience. Traditional academic structures are being redefined. Budgets grow tighter, while concerns about institutional competitiveness and relevance inevitably increase.

New forms of collaboration offer opportunity, however. As my colleague President E. Gordon Gee of West Virginia University comments, "Once, it was a matter of 'publish or perish.' Now it's 'partner or perish.'"

In short, we have to be at the top of our game, every day and in every respect. And we need to be alert to those who can share and contribute to our mission, our vision, and our values.

I am confident about our future here at Virginia Wesleyan. Our campus is vibrant, our faculty and staff are devoted professionals, and our possibilities for collaboration and innovation are exceptional. This afternoon I would like to share with you some of my perspectives as we go forward, and to invite your engagement and support for bringing to Wesleyan all that it most richly deserves.

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I am a firm believer in the guidance and insight provided by objective institutional reviews. I have found reviews to be particularly valuable in presidential transitions. For our College, noted authority and former Old Dominion University president James V. Koch led an institutional review of Virginia Wesleyan during the transition. Commissioned by the Board of Trustees, he and his team of researchers devoted a significant portion of time to data analysis and to interviewing more than 100 stakeholders of the College. The report from Dr. Koch's team has been shared with our Board Chair and me, and we will be discussing their findings at the Board level soon. It is my intent to share the report with the campus community after that. The Institutional Review contains specific recommendations for institutional progress.

The recommendations address a broad range of issues, concerns, and opportunities, from the strength of our general studies curriculum to trusteeship, from maintaining flexibility in enrollment to hiring with sensitivity to diversity.

The review notes, however: "If the College energetically and intelligently assesses its situation and avoids "business as usual" approaches to the challenges it faces, then it can...prosper even as most of higher education experiences upheaval."

Working with our Board of Trustees and representatives of all of the stakeholder groups of our College, our senior team and I will develop strategies to analyze and implement the key recommendations of the Institutional Review. We look forward to engaging you in this process of being transitional and transparent.

Central to sound planning and goal achievement is effective communication. It serves as the platform for setting institutional priorities and defining strategies. To have vigorous external

communication, I believe we must have strong internal ways of communicating. All communication platforms must work together, and social media outlets have united them as never before.

Earlier this year I was named one of the most active social media presidents in the country in a book that profiled 22 North American college and university leaders. Many of you have been following and interacting with me via social media. But it's not about me. It's about the mission, traditions, and excitement of the colleges I have been honored to serve. In an age when our students love "selfies," it's vital that our campuses have a strong and appropriate presence on social media, as well—that we share our institutional "selfies," too. Our brand is too important, our need to compete too compelling, to be relegated to outmoded ways of marketing our story. When it comes to enrollment, fundraising, and other avenues of securing resources, in the integrated media age in which we live, we must recognize that our internal image is often very public. We need to stay on message, and be as positive as we can as we identify the kinds of leaders we wish to attract to Virginia Wesleyan—from students to faculty and staff to trustees, alumni, families, and friends.

As part of this necessary process, I look forward to engaging our talented faculty in meaningful discussions about where we've been, where we're going, and where we need to go. You are the heart of what we do here, and I value your perspective.

At the same time, I think it's clear that the role of faculty at colleges and universities continues to evolve. For example, at many institutions, faculty are being expected to take a greater role in fundraising and student recruitment. Institutional advancement and enrollment offices cannot do all of the heavy lifting; they need the active support of faculty for writing grant proposals, engaging alumni, recruiting and retaining students, and relaying the institutional message and image. The honored tradition of shared governance within the academy also implies, especially in these challenging times, shared responsibility.

To broaden discussion and participation in shared governance, I recently announced some adjustments to the College's organizational model. These include our leadership team. Let me recognize them:

President's Cabinet

Dr. Timothy O'Rourke, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Kenneth R. Perry Dean of the College

Cary Sawyer, Vice President for Finance

David Buckingham, Vice President for Student Affairs

Bruce Vaughan, Vice President for Operations

Mita Vail, Vice President for College Advancement

Layne Timlin, Executive Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff

To place a stronger operational emphasis in certain key administrative areas, the following positions will be non-cabinet direct reports to me and will serve on our executive staff:

President's Executive Staff

Nelson Davis, Dean of Admissions

Joanne Renn, Director of Intercollegiate Athletics

Don Stauffer, Senior Researcher and Policy Analyst

To place a stronger emphasis on academic and administrative technology, the new Chief Information Officer will also be a part of the Executive Staff after that position is filled through a national search.

Additionally, I have appointed a Leadership Council that will consist of 23 department directors and the chairs of the three academic divisions.

To foster broader discussion on key intercollegiate athletics issues, I have formulated an Athletics Management Council which I will chair. Membership will include the Director of Athletics, the NCAA Compliance Officer, the Senior Woman Administrator, and our two Faculty Athletics Representatives. At least once per semester, we will invite participation from the Chair of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee.

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For all of us, the responsibility for a quality student experience at Virginia Wesleyan is paramount. At my alma mater, West Virginia Wesleyan, I developed my philosophy of the value of the comprehensive learning experience that only small residential colleges can provide. I have come to realize that a student's 168-hour week consists of 18 hours in the classroom and 50 sleeping; and for the remaining 100 hours, it is our responsibility to collaborate with the student to provide his or her entire educational experience. It is up to all of us on campus to invest in that process, and to keep it attractive and up to date.

When previous generations matriculated, they found bunk beds, a desk and a chair in the rooms of their residence halls—and not much else. They ate “mystery meat” in a traditional cafeteria with limited menu options. Athletic facilities and other amenities were basic. Today's students (and their parents) expect facilities and student services that were unimaginable to earlier generations. This has created an enrollment climate unprecedented in my experience. In today's volatile higher education marketplace, we have little choice but to offer comfort, convenience, and competitiveness for student security and success. It's a challenge I gladly accept as we position Virginia Wesleyan to be not only student-centered but student-committed. These days, “Business as usual” simply will not suffice.

In support of student recruitment and retention, we need to encourage students to take advantage of three very strong options available to them through The Wesleyan Experience. These are internships, undergraduate research, and study away/international experiences. Service learning and community engagement are equally as important as our graduates aspire to be leaders in their communities. As you know, we live in a global society. Our students will compete with others not only from Richmond and Washington, but also from Beijing and New Delhi. Our goal should be to place them in competitive career environments, to encourage and support them if they perform research, and to foster their curiosity and capability for travel away and abroad. Let us help them build their careers but also enrich their lives, to challenge them to be innovative and inspired, and to introduce them to a myriad of experiences, from Wall Street to Silicon Valley to the Louvre. Let us also encourage them to look up from their personal technology even as we seek appropriately to incorporate such technological resources into our teaching.

I am extremely proud that for more than 17 of my years as a president, I have been affiliated with NCAA Division III institutions. Being at the Division III level of intercollegiate athletics encourages the student-athlete to develop not just in his or her chosen sport, but also in the classroom and as productive

members in their campus community. A recent study states that graduation rates for student-athletes at the Division III level surpass those of the student body as a whole. Some of my favorite moments have come when I see students on graduation day who have reached their full potential because they have taken advantage of the opportunities only available to them at a private, liberal arts, Division III institution.

The role of intercollegiate athletics in recruitment and retention should not be underestimated. As a member of the respected Old Dominion Athletic Conference, we are fortunate to field 19 teams for men and women. Our NCAA Division III athletic programs are an exciting part of the college experience for the student-athletes who represent nearly 25 percent of our student population.

To our student athletes, coaches, parents, families, members of the Marlin Athletic Club, and all of our fans, which I know includes many of you, I pledge my heartfelt support as a new Marlin in the hope that our teams will win as competitors, yes, but also prevail in the many other arenas that will define their lives in the years to come.

I am especially proud of the tradition of service learning honored by our athletes, other students, faculty and staff. The thousands of hours of service that we contribute have immediate benefit to individuals and charities while instilling skills of leadership and team work in us as volunteers. From Relay for Life to alternative spring breaks, the S.E.A.L. Student Environmental Awareness League to Habitat for Humanity, Circle K, and other worthy needs, organizations, and causes, Virginia Wesleyan outreach and service present distinctive opportunities for student engagement, effective leadership, and social awareness. I congratulate Diane Hotaling, our director of community service, and all whose contributions through volunteerism and service learning mean so much to our campus and our wider community. We must make this mission driven program a higher priority campus wide and interpret its value beyond the campus community.

As our mission statement underscores, “In accord with our United Methodist heritage, Virginia Wesleyan aspires to be a supportive community that is committed to social responsibility, ethical conduct, higher learning and religious freedom.” These few words capture the historical significance and relevance of our United Methodist heritage. As a lifelong Methodist, I am pleased to participate in the robust campus life at Wesleyan that celebrates that heritage. Our tradition of all-campus worship, weekly Bible studies, student-led worship, and other means of coming together in fellowship and friendship are central to who we are as a United Methodist-related and -inspired college. I look forward to working with our talented chaplain, Rev.

Greg West, campus partners and with member churches of the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church to further enrich our relationship on behalf of the Church, this College, our affiliated organizations, and the spiritual and social-justice needs and aspirations of those we serve.

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Virginia Wesleyan has garnered many “points of pride” – accolades that can make us all stand a little taller. Here are some highlights:

- The College has once again been chosen as one of the nation’s best by The Princeton Review and will be featured in its guide, *The Best 380 Colleges: 2016 Edition*. Student responses to The Princeton Review include the following kinds of statements: The strength of Virginia Wesleyan College, located across 300 “beautiful” wooded acres in Norfolk/Virginia Beach, lies in its capability “to create a community feel and successfully bring new students into the fold seamlessly.” Students love the College’s compact size, which is “small enough that you can walk into a room and name at least five people whom you know and like, but big enough that it is not full of clones.”
- The College has also been selected by The Princeton Review as one of the most environmentally responsible colleges in the U.S. and Canada, and is profiled in its *Guide to 353 Green Colleges: 2015 Edition*.
- We were recognized as one of the top eight liberal arts colleges in the country for veterans by *U.S. News & World Report* in its ranking of the *Best Colleges for Veterans*.
- We are also a 2015-2016 College of Distinction, chosen for excellence in student-focused higher education and exemplary commitment to the Four Distinctions set forth by *CollegesofDistinction.com*. These are: engaged students, great teaching, a vibrant community, and successful outcomes.
- We’ve been featured by *Forbes* on its 2015 list of “50 College Gems With Bargain Tuitions, SAT Optional Policies And Openings.”

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Our outstanding Director of Athletics Joanne Renn leads a department that increases the visibility of the College and provides additional points of pride:

- Men’s basketball reached the NCAA Division III Final Four;

- Women's Basketball won their first-ever ODAC Championship, and
- Both the men's and women's basketball teams competed in the NCAA national tournament;
- Softball competed in the NCAA Regional Tournament and finished 11th in the country. The team was recognized as the NCAA statistical champion for steals per game.
- Our men's athletic teams brought home their first ODAC Commissioner's Cup.
- Wesleyan was named the 40th best college for female athletes. This encompasses all three NCAA divisions. Among Division III colleges, Wesleyan was 11th in a field of more than 400. We were the only ODAC member to break the top 50.
- Four Marlin athletes were honored as All-Americans.

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The five strategic priorities in our strategic plan, *VWC 2020: Pathway to Prominence*, are clearly the focus of our efforts to enhance faculty excellence and promote intellectual inquiry, active and experiential learning, and civic engagement for students. Thanks to Laynee Timlin, Executive Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff, for her leadership of our strategic planning process.

In recent years, the College has invested more than \$4.5 million in the natural sciences through facility renovations, additions of major equipment and STEM-focused scholarships. Last year, The National Science Foundation awarded a grant of \$123,000 to the College for the purchase of a gas chromatograph mass spectrometer. Thanks to the principal investigators—Chemistry Professors Maury Howard and Kevin Kittredge. As a result of these and other developments, enrollment in the natural sciences has grown by 111 percent in the last five years and Biology has become the most popular major, representing 12.1 percent of the student population in the fall of 2014.

Building on the legacy of our 4 x 4 curriculum (now in its fifth year), Virginia Wesleyan continues to be a national leader in curricular innovation. The Teagle Foundation awarded us a grant in the amount of \$280,000 as the lead institution in a four-campus, 30-month consortium examining ways to build “a more compelling and coherent liberal arts curriculum.” Our consortium partners are Davis & Elkins College, Eckerd College, and Shenandoah University.

Virginia Wesleyan's 21-member Model UN team won Honorable Mention recognition at the April 2015 Model United Nations Conference in New York—the second time the team has gained such acclaim.

Faculty accomplishments abound under the leadership of our talented Vice President for Academic Affairs and Kenneth R. Perry Dean of the College, Dr. Timothy O'Rourke.

One notable example of our rich and varied faculty scholarly activity is that of Professor of Philosophy Steven Emmanuel who co-edited *Kierkegaard's Concepts*, a magisterial, six-volume, 1500-page compendium, for which the final volume was published in 2015. In addition, a dedicated group of faculty and staff have also been immersed in design and implementation plans for our Quality Enhancement Plan, entitled "See Change." Kudos to our Director of Experiential Learning Sara Sewell and her team for all of their hard work. The newly established Center for Experiential Learning on the first floor of Clarke Hall is open and ready for students. I have no doubt that we will all SEE CHANGE everywhere soon. Seeing change will be a SEA CHANGE, indeed!

A special thank-you to David Dirlam, Joyce Howell, Amy Rush and Tim O'Rourke who have done some exceptional work to prepare us well for our upcoming visit with the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools- Commission on Colleges in September. I appreciate all of the work from so many of you that has gone into this essential process.

The establishment of the Center for Innovative Teaching and Engaged Learning (INTEL) in the Batten Center will further open doors for leadership and support for academic initiatives. Thanks to the efforts of Professor of Sociology and Associate Dean Kathy Stolley, and those on the INTEL Committee, for leading the charge to support faculty in developing innovative approaches to their teaching while expanding academic technology.

We've continued to support faculty excellence in many ways. During the 2014-15 academic year, 10 "Talk about Teaching" sessions were presented by 22 members of the faculty; sixteen faculty members attended the Conference on Higher Education Pedagogy sponsored by the Center for Instructional Development and Education Research; and two INTEL grants were funded for faculty projects. A grant

supported two digital humanities workshops for faculty, and the work of 40 faculty members was touted at the annual “Feather in Your Cap” faculty recognition event.

Faculty excellence continues as we welcome the newest members of our faculty, all highly qualified professionals who hold the highest degrees in their fields. I invite them to stand to be recognized.

Dr. M. Annette Clayton — Assistant Professor of Social Work and Internship Director

Dr. William J. McConnell — Assistant Professor of Education

Dr. Bryson Mortensen — Assistant Professor of Music and Director of Choral Music

Dr. William R. Pruitt — Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice

Ms. Sophie Rondeau — Technical Services Librarian

Dr. Antje Verena Schwennicke — Assistant Professor of Political Science

Dr. Jason Squinobal — Assistant Professor of Music and Director of Instrumental Music

Dr. Jill Sturts — Assistant Professor of Recreation and Leisure Studies

Please join me in welcoming them to Virginia Wesleyan!

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I recently asked David Buckingham to return exclusively to the post of Vice President for Student Affairs – a role he has held for most of his 33 years here. He will lead our efforts to cultivate a vibrant campus community that supports student engagement, which have resulted in some accomplishments of note:

- We successfully implemented the LiveSafe app which helped to engage our students and enhance our campus communications with regard to safety. And the adoption of an electronic guest "front gate registration" program was a collaborative effort by SGA and Campus Security. My compliments to our Director of Campus Security Jerry Mance, and his staff, for their good work in keeping a safe and secure campus.
- Student community service continued at a noteworthy level of engagement—our partnership with Virginia Beach Public Schools at Shelton Park Elementary garnered recognition as a model partnership for the city.

- Recreational activities, known by students as Rec X, increased student participation by ten percent due to the fine efforts of Jason Seward and the Batten Center staff; and the sustained growth and development of campus spiritual life continued to thrive under the leadership of our Chaplain.

Strengthening connections between the College and our community resulted in new relationships with organizations such as Peace Corps Prep, NATO ACT, the Together We Can Foundation, U.S. China Century Education Program (American Tourism and Culture Internships), and the Western Bayside Neighborhood that surrounds our campus. The College's week-long On-Campus Winter Homeless Shelter, in its ninth year, continues to be a crown jewel for the campus and an experience that our students and all involved find transformational.

In partnership with Norfolk State University, several members of our faculty and staff have been representing the College on a regional group devoted to support for a commemorative event in 2019 to honor the 400-year anniversary of the first arrival of African slaves in Virginia and other important events in Virginia's history in 1619. Plans are underway to build momentum for the 2019 commemoration, and I'm proud to share that Virginia Wesleyan will host the 2015-16 speakers/events series for this collaborative venture titled "Entangled Identities: Legacies of 1619."

Expanding our connections with alumni is also critical and a top priority for Vice President for Advancement Mita Vail and Director of Alumni Relations Lina Green. I'm happy to note that this year's alumni association board achieved 100% participation in our annual fund. There is great opportunity to engage our alumni to a larger degree and we intend to do so. Despite a proud group of alumni who continuously express loyalty to Virginia Wesleyan College through their financial support, and we are grateful to them, our overall alumni giving participation seriously lags behind our peers. We must improve that.

We have had outstanding success in the major gifts area and the result is apparent on campus. In our quest to create an even more inspiring sense of place on the Virginia Wesleyan Campus, numerous improvements have included:

- More than \$600,000 in renovations to Blocker Hall;
- Completion of the Floyd E. Kellam, Jr., Social Sciences Lab and the establishment of a maintenance reserve for this space;
- Planning and design for a new academic arts building to be named after Susan and David Goode. Five-year gifts and pledges have surpassed \$6 million.
- Design for the 40,000-square-foot Greer Environmental Sciences Center which will open in fall 2017, creating powerful connections for students to local ecological communities and expanding collaboration with regional environmental organizations;
- Near completion of the \$3 million Birdsong Field, the synthetic turf field with lights and concession stands. Also providing additional parking for Village II, this facility is on schedule for use September 1. Our special thanks to the Birdsong Corporation and George and Sue Birdsong and several other supporters for making this project possible. The Birdsongs have been generous supporters of Virginia Wesleyan throughout the College's history.
- Renovations have been made in the Jane P. Batten Student Center to create a new home for the Adult Studies Program;
- The new Center for Experiential Learning in Clarke Hall is now home to Undergraduate Research, Study Away/ international programs, Career Services and Internships;
- Other campus improvements have included renovations in Bray Village, roof replacements on Gum and Boyd Halls, residence-life offices in Brock Village, and increased bandwidth and other upgrades to our technology.

Special thanks to Bruce Vaughan, Vice President for Operations, for leading this process within a very short timeline.

Under the leadership of our outstanding Vice President for Finance Cary Sawyer, our overall assets have grown to almost \$149 million, our endowment to approximately \$58 million, and our financial processes in place have gained external recognition for transparency. All of this has been accomplished during an extremely challenging period for private higher education.

During the transition, I observed “Quality Service Pledge” plaques campus wide that read: “We pledge to make service at Virginia Wesleyan College friendly and considerate, prompt and efficient, clear and flexible.” Even though that is a campus-wide commitment, Cary clearly emulates those qualities.

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Let me take a few moments now to challenge all of us to think about where we need to go organizationally as an institution in the next three to five years, and beyond...

First, an overview: We are second tier in the National Liberal Arts category. Our goal should be consistently for a ranking within the first tier and we should aspire to be in the top 50. I know...college rankings are sometimes suspect in the public’s and educators’ collective thinking. We are very much a first tier college in our people and programs. The reality, however, is that the top 50 national liberal arts colleges have additional resources currently beyond our reach but which we must strive for. The average head count and full-time enrollments of top 50 programs are closer to 2,000 and 1,500 respectively with endowments averaging nearly \$700 million—strong and vital indicators of viability and relevance. The additional resources create the margins of success.

Put simply, the \$700 million average endowment for the top 50 liberal arts colleges provides \$30 to \$35 million per year of additional revenues that provide what I like to call margins of success. The additional enrollment creates the appropriate critical mass and drives stability and balance in the operating fund.

To achieve and maintain first tier and move toward top-50 status, of course, we will need to hit aggressive revenue targets in enrollment and fundraising. I believe, however, that we can and must aspire to this level of national prominence, campus prosperity, and regional influence. The timing is right to plan for the kind of success that not only will place us in the First Tier but also among the first and top choices for a premier, residential, liberal arts experience in the minds of prospective students here at home and throughout the country.

External validation of our quality is very important. As I pointed out earlier, *Forbes* featured Virginia Wesleyan College on its annual list of “50 College Gems With Bargain Tuitions, SAT Optional Policies And Openings.” These selections are paired down from 350 institutions that have reported to the National

Association for College Admission Counseling that they are still accepting freshman and transfer applications.

Just as important are strategic positioning and sound planning based on parameters of sustainability and growth.

During the transition, I asked several unconnected experts in the higher education field to analyze our data and recommend our appropriate size and market. We utilized comparative data from IPEDS, CUPA, The Austen Group and several specialized services to evaluate our current status and project appropriate growth margins.

The conclusions are in: all data and experts consulted point to a very bright future for our College. Our people, our programs, and our location recommend growth in admissions *if* we adopt a clear, consistent, and effective long-term strategy in this vital area. The late George Keller, author of the 1984 higher education bestseller *Academic Strategy*, said that private colleges with endowments under \$100 million must have full-time residential populations of at least 1,100.

But that was then. This is now the reality: A college like Wesleyan, with an endowment of \$58 million, must grow its headcount to 2,000 — with at least 1,500 traditional full-time, approximately 1,100 residential, and 300 in the Adult Studies Program. Our current levels do not provide the appropriate margins to provide the necessary resources to drive our budget.

What's the answer? There are several, and we should move quickly to take advantage of them.

First, we can achieve our headcount enrollment target of 2,000 and 1,500 full-time if we can consistently admit classes of more than 400 freshmen each year and further develop our adult program with expanded offerings and a modest online program. The growth is also dependent on facilitating partnerships with selected community colleges to enroll 120 upper-level transfer students per year.

Second, dual-degree and bachelor's-to-master's programs with distinguished partners will enhance our own attractiveness as a beginning point for higher education. Current trends in higher education suggest that the best colleges are developing dual-credit programs with outstanding partners. We would be wise to establish similar relationships with Norfolk Academy and Norfolk Collegiate as soon as this fall.

Simultaneously, we must explore accelerated three-year bachelor's degree programs for exceptional students in certain programs. This is important because students and their families increasingly hope to complete the traditional four-year program by fast-tracking it to three years.

Third, let us recognize that reaching out to new student audiences beyond the traditional 18-to-21-year-old cohort group can result in notable gains in admissions. For example, let's again grow our adult-studies program, including some new programs, a mixture of delivery formats and a manageable online program in selected academic fields. This will require more aggressive marketing, a series of new certificate programs, some summer graduate programs for teachers in areas such as biology, chemistry and environmental science, possible satellite locations, and perhaps a new master of education program in, for example, educational administration.

Fourth, exploring international recruitment markets in Singapore, Hong Kong, Beijing, India, and other advancing nations can be a win-win for Wesleyan. Let us welcome students from abroad who value the American system of education along with the potential of career starts here in this country. Many will be so-called tuition full-payers for the privilege.

Fifth, we must expand our auxiliary revenues. This spacious, beautiful campus is in operation 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. We need to better utilize summer and break periods to generate additional revenues.

Sixth, we must grow the alumni participation rate and the annual fund. An emphasis on both areas will result in additional unrestricted funds during challenging economic times. Our alumni participation rate must grow by 10 percent this year.

Last but not least, we must explore improvements to some of our older residence halls and construction of new. This might include privatized housing on our 12-acre property directly across from the campus. Today's students have far different expectations of comfort and convenience than many of us did. We must remember that when choosing a college, they and their parents vote with their checkbooks.

Our enrollment goals will require the participation and support of every member of the Wesleyan community, from those in the "front lines" of recruitment and student services, to faculty whose solid teaching, advising, and mentoring are so crucial to retention, to our alumni and friends who play a valuable

role in recommending prospective students to us, providing mentoring and internships, and early advantages for entry-level career positions.

In addition to developing more productive revenue streams through student recruitment, we need to adjust our operational model. Working with the Board of Trustees and senior leadership of the College, we will ensure that our resources are wisely invested, fundraising and auxiliary resource income maximized, endowment increased, and budgeting and financial operations carefully integrated with our needs now and expected growth in the years ahead.

I think we're all pleased, in the meantime, to see several important construction projects rising on our campus—predictors of our future growth and increasing prominence.

First is The Greer Center for Environmental Sciences, a fully funded, 40,000-square-foot facility that will create additional niche programs in our already strong sciences area. Honoring former President Billy Greer for his longstanding advocacy of a strong sciences program and his commitment to environmental sustainability during his tenure, the Center will have multiple benefits to our campus community and new partners with whom we wish to collaborate around the Chesapeake watershed and beyond. Instructional spaces will be designed to be active learning-lab areas that encompass our commitment to understanding and preserving the broader natural environment of our planet. For example, the building will be organized around the Earth's four "spheres"—the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, and biosphere.

We'll be inviting faculty input in the review and design of the instructional and support features, including lab research spaces, classroom configurations, and other areas for this magnificent facility that will be located at the south end of the academic lawn, completing the campus quadrangle. Our expectation is that the Greer Center will foster continued growth and prominence within the Division of Natural Sciences and Math, while serving as a fully integrated, interactive, and state-of-the-art model for teaching and research. What a jewel this will be for our small college! We are deeply grateful to the anonymous donor who has fully funded this outstanding project. Construction will begin after the first of the year with a scheduled completion of summer 2017.

Our special thanks to Professors Soraya Bartol (Biology), Chris Haley (Environmental Science), and Maynard Schaus (Biology) who have devoted expertise and energy to this exciting project. Mita Vail and Suzanne Savage rounded out the members who helped to plan this initiative prior to its May 20 public announcement.

We're also pleased that we are closer to finalizing an agreement for a new building located on the South side of the campus—funded by the YMCA of South Hampton Roads—that will benefit both the YMCA and Virginia Wesleyan College. The facility and accompanying outdoor amphitheater will meet summer camp needs and provide classroom and office space for the College. Summer camps and conferences continue to be vital “feeders” for undergraduate matriculation and a source of auxiliary revenue. I look forward to sharing more about this project in the very near future. Currently, plans call for a summer 2017 completion.

And planning has begun, with \$6 million in initial commitments, for Goode Hall, our proposed new fine and performing arts center. The arts are essential to the liberal education experience, and our programs in art, music, and theatre enrich not only our campus community but the wider service area of the institution. A good example is The Center for Sacred Music which welcomed the 2015 Worship & Music Conference in late July. Nearly 200 guests from 18 states attended the conference, an annual non-denominational showcase for instruction in the sacred arts. Congratulations to Director of the Center for Sacred Music Sandi Billy for another successful event.

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With every new facility and incoming class, we rededicate ourselves to our own timeless and, yes, if I may invoke the word, *sacred*, responsibilities. In these uncertain times for higher education, the College is nevertheless poised for growth, expanding influence and leadership, and increased service to our state, the region, and the nation. I look forward to hearing your Virginia Wesleyan stories even as we prepare together to write the rest of our story—a message of inspiration informed by our United Methodist heritage, of aspiration conveyed through academic excellence and service, and, in no small measure, perspiration. For small liberal arts colleges take a lot of care and hard work to flourish today. Yet I can think of no more

rewarding profession than ours of transforming lives through education. What we hope to achieve *will* take hard work by each and every one of us, but the timing is in our favor, and the rewards will be long lasting.

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Let me close by saying what a privilege it is to join the Virginia Wesleyan community. I ask for your support as we build on the success of our more than a half century of progress, and lay the foundation for an even brighter future. As with the relentless rhythms and comforting predictability of the tides that sweep across the Chesapeake, we Wesleyanites crave patterns of continuity and the assurance of permanence, but also the value of progress and needed change. That, along with the excitement of imparting what we know to each of our students, will sustain us. We plan to be here for many years to come. How we prepare, now, for our future prosperity will make our adventure successful, meaningful, and pleasurable.

With your active engagement each and every day, we will achieve everything we desire and deserve.

Because, as we all know so well, *It's a Great Day to Be a Marlin!*

Thank you.



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