

### **Progress and Accomplishment**

Some of us have been here throughout the summer, literally and figuratively, planning and preparing. Some of you arrived a few weeks ago and hit the ground running as you arrived for fall sports and have been preparing seemingly day and night for your season openers (...thank God for the start of classes, right?). Others arrived just a few days ago. Employees have had their Fall Forum. We've had Move-In Day, Game Nite, the Advanced Learning Term, Night on the Town, the First Day of Classes, and now Opening Convocation, and Stand Up later tonight.

The beginning of a new academic year provides us with a number of great opportunities to celebrate and kick-off a new phase in our lives. For some of us, kicking-off the new year of college is something that's happening for the first time. For others of us, it may be a little more routine as we settle back into familiar surroundings; for me this makes it number 28. With that said, new or familiar, it need not lose its significance and importance as a time when we can celebrate the closing of the prior year and prepare ourselves for the new year ahead.

We have a number of things to celebrate about last year. And, I'm sure each of you have your own personal "wins." For some, it was graduation from high school and a successful migration to college. With that, let me ask each of our new freshmen and other first-time Olivet College students to stand... feel welcome as our newest members of the Olivet College community; we're glad you're here.

Last year we inaugurated a new president; I hope he works out. The inauguration allowed us to bring a large number of people from around the state (and a few from further away) to campus to connect to our college, our students, and our visions and hopes for the future. We ended the academic year with a commencement celebration that conferred degrees on the largest graduating class in the history of Olivet College and the first class of students receiving the MBA degree. In between we had many accomplishments, collectively and individually, a few of which I'd like to mention today.

First, our Student Government Association took another major step forward in its ability to serve, lead, and meet the needs of students. The SGA fee paid by all students generated approximately \$26,000 from students, for students, and managed by students. Another similar amount will be generated this year and I encourage each of you to support your SGA officers and participate in the process by giving your best ideas, making strong proposals for how funds can best be used, and most importantly get involved.

The second accomplishment I'd like to highlight was the second annual All Greek Service Trip that took place during pledging. Two full buses of students went to Port Austin and engaged in

performing about 500 hours of community service in a single day. The positive impact on that community was tremendous and I believe that the positive impact on students, the Greek system, and Olivet College was equally positive and important. One of our projects, helping to complete a new History Center, helped them to open their Center in the early summer. Since, they've had over 1,000 visitors and next weekend Mike Fales and I will be returning to Port Austin to participate in a Grand Opening celebration of the Center. Olivet College students have made a significant difference in the lives and vitality of that community.

Last year also saw us listed by US News & World Report in their listings of Best in the Midwest colleges. We also saw Washington Monthly's second-time listing of Olivet College in the top 25% of best college's in the nation in their effort to identify colleges based on how they make a difference in communities and for students.

I'd also be remiss if I didn't mention at least a few of the facilities improvements that have happened since this time last year. These include: continued renovation and improvements at Mott Academic Center in the labs and classrooms where several hundred-thousand dollars have been invested, as well as, new computers at the library. There are also a few projects I know students really appreciate: additional new furniture at the dorms; the new equipment and renovations at the fitness centers, the renovated pool and, importantly, the new paving at the Shipherd Hall parking lot.

This year will find us continuing to embrace and enhance the Olivet College experience as something that's much more than coming to campus, going to class, and then leaving to carry on with the rest of our lives. The Olivet College experience includes classroom learning in the traditional ways we all know it, but we also recognize that this is something that comprises one of the smallest amounts of time for us each week. The Olivet College experience also needs to include substantial learning outside of the classroom in individual and group study. It also includes living, growing, developing, and, yes, having fun in relationship with others all trying to accomplish the same thing. That's what the Olivet College experience is all about.

This year, we'll continue to work on enhancing and improving the vibrancy of our campus and community along with the rest of our strategic objectives for 2020 and Beyond. We'll see big improvements this year with the tremendous increase in new students and in students living on campus. The over 500 new students joining us this fall comprise the largest incoming class in the history of the college. Last year, housing was at about 80% capacity. This year, campus housing is for all practical purposes full; and that's with the addition of a number of new beds. Our total enrollment is now over 1,100 even with the record graduating class of last year. Our goal to grow our enrollment to 1,800 or more is well on its way and I look forward to the day when we'll have not 640 students living, learning and playing on campus, but 1,400 or more.

This year will also see a number of new initiatives that will strengthen, recognize, and celebrate the academic potential and achievements of our students.

Today, I'm pleased to formally announce that, through the generosity of David Cutler and his friends and colleagues, at this spring's Honors Convocation we will award the David Cutler Fellowship Prize to one or more students who demonstrate excellence and a potential to make substantial contributions to mathematics, science, and/or computer science. These fellowships will carry with them not only a financial award, but also the honor of being designated as Cutler Fellows honoring an alum of Olivet College who created the Microsoft Windows platform and is one of the greatest contributors to technology and modern society. I'm also pleased to say that David will be spending time with our math, science and computer science honors students and faculty during this fall's homecoming weekend.

I'm also pleased to announce the initiation of the President's Leadership Institute, a new and exciting program focused on identifying, supporting, and developing leadership talent in Olivet College students. This program will invite a small number of our most capable and promising student leaders to join me and a faculty of corporate and community leaders in a year-long special curriculum that will help students to develop the high performing leadership skills and experiences needed for success upon graduation and in the top positions in professions and communities. Nominations and invitations to join the program will be coming out in the next couple of weeks, so stay tuned.

I also want to highlight the expanded and enhanced Global Citizens Honors Program. This fall, we added a strong incoming class of honors scholars to our current honors students. I want to especially recognize and congratulate Hailey Willett, an entering freshman from Leslie High School, who's this year's recipient of the inaugural Global Citizens Honors Scholarship. Congratulations Hailey.

As you can see, there's a lot happening at Olivet College. A few other items I want to be sure students are aware of include:

The campus master planning project. The college is spending this academic year, planning the college campus of the future. This will definitely include ideas for a new student center, renovated and new campus housing, and renovated and expanded academic spaces. Our planning team will be working with Student Government to get student input. Please give us your best ideas.

We'll also be preparing for a major renovation of the dining hall at the Kirk Center. The entire first floor will be redone to accommodate a bigger, better, and greatly expanded array of dining options. This will bring the Olivet College dining experience up to a quality equal to anyone else in the country. Initial designs have been presented to us and we'll be seeking student input over the next month. Again, please give us your best ideas.

And now, let me end with a few framing words that might help us to contextualize the ultimate aim for why we're here. Let me do so by relying on the combined wisdom of two people I think you all know.

First, the actress Katharine Hepburn said, "Life is to be lived. If you have to support yourself, you had bloody well better find some way that is going to be interesting. And you don't do that by sitting around."

I'd like to join this idea with the observation of T.E. Lawrence (who was more famously known as "Lawrence of Arabia") when he offered, "All men dream, but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds, wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act on their dreams with open eyes, to make them possible."

From this I say, use your time here at Olivet College to find your passion, that "thing" that is going to be interesting. Then, don't just dream about it "in the dusty recesses of your mind," but "dream with open eyes," working each day during your living and learning time here at Olivet College so as to realize your passions and interests into a "life that's lived."

Thank you for your time and attention... and good luck on the year ahead.