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focus



3 DR. NAOMI BURGOS LYNN '54
WILL GIVE
COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

5 B.S. DEGREE IN BIOLOGY
NOW OFFERED

27 COLLEGE RECEIVES WOOD
BEQUEST

THE GIBSON YEARS
1993-2010



GREETINGS *from* MARYVILLE COLLEGE!

Folks on the Maryville College campus know that I hold in special esteem **Dr. Samuel Tyndale Wilson (Class of 1878)**, Maryville's fifth president. In past issues of *FOCUS*, in convocations, in addresses to civic clubs, I have quoted liberally from his centennial history of the College. A hundred years ago Dr. Wilson was at the helm. He had been serving for nine years and would continue to serve for another two decades. His presidency was a time of transformation – in physical plant, in enrollment, in financial strength, in reputation – for Maryville. His successor, **Dr. Ralph Waldo Lloyd '15**, said about him: "It was under Dr. Wilson's leadership that [Maryville] developed from a good college and academy to a first-rank college."

"...I seem to hear faint strains of Bob Hope's old theme song, 'Thanks for the Memories,' wafting through my mind."

Dr. Wilson has been an inspiration to me during my own time of service. I am grateful to him for that inspiration and for his transformational work in the College I would, 63 years after his tenure, come to serve. I am likewise grateful to the many Maryville alumni with whom Rachel and I have visited across the country over the 17 years that I have been privileged to occupy the president's office. They have inspired me, too, as have the dedicated faculty and staff with whom I have served, and the thousands of students who have helped keep me feeling younger than my years.

These days I seem to hear faint strains of Bob Hope's old theme song, "Thanks for the Memories," wafting through my mind. I treasure memories of lunches with **Fred Young '37** at the Union League Club in Chicago, hearing stories of his time as a Maryville student during Dr. Lloyd's presidency, and of how he determined then to succeed in business, became a banker, wrote *How to Get Rich and Stay Rich*, and founded Wealth Watchers of America. **Mary Swain Wood '29** similarly enriched my life at every visit to her apartment in Dallas, where she told about her days selling *Dick and Jane* readers in Texas, and where she always voiced her love of Maryville and clearly had read every word of every College publication, *FOCUS* and others, that we mailed to her. I recall fondly the image of **Freeman Wyche** and **Donald Vandenberg**, classmates from the mid 1950s, who had not seen each other in half a century, embracing at Maryville's celebration of re-integration in October of 2008. There was the 50-year celebration, too, of the MC veterans – but not the winners – of the 1947 Tangerine Bowl, who received copies of the film of that historic battle, discovering that their recollections of the contest weren't totally accurate. So many memories...

I'll miss those visits with alumni, the lunch conversations with individual faculty and staff members, the campus Christmas dinners, the dedications of new buildings, the rhythm of the academic year, and especially the satisfaction of seeing freshmen mature into graduating seniors. But with retirement there will be opportunities to travel and write, and perhaps other opportunities that I can't yet foresee. *Good Start: A Guidebook for New Faculty in Liberal Arts Colleges*, which I published back in 1992, just before coming to Maryville, needs revision, and I want to get that done. Liberal arts education is intended to prepare people for lives of citizenship and leadership, a purpose just as valid today as it was in ancient Greece; I will be looking for new ways that I might contribute to that endeavor. My life has always been in God's hands, and we'll see just what that means for the retirement years.

It has been a true blessing to serve in the Maryville College vineyard. My thanks to all the readers of *FOCUS* who have followed the progress of the College over these last 17 years, and who have provided support and encouragement for the work here.

My years of service will fall short of Dr. Wilson's 29 years, coming to a total of 17 years as this academic year concludes. He was younger than I when he took office, but I will retire at exactly the same age he did. We will have at least that in common.

Samuel W. Wilson



THE GIBSON 1993-2010

| PHOTO BY STEPHEN SPARTANA |

IN LATE 1992, DR. GERALD W. GIBSON was one of three candidates invited to the Maryville College campus by a presidential search committee. Then dean of Roanoke College in Roanoke, Va., Gibson, who held a doctoral degree in organic chemistry from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, had applied to become the 10th president of Maryville College after conducting research and asking colleagues what they knew of the 173-year-old East Tennessee institution.

He looked first to data on academic reputation published by U.S. News and World Report, which showed Maryville College in an upper tier – definitely worth his consideration to apply for the presidential position.

But a friend and dean at another college told Gibson that he thought Maryville was close to bankruptcy and closing.

Driving around the campus in December of 1992, Gibson was reminded of his friend’s earlier assessment of Maryville College’s financial status. Those first impressions of the College – neglected facilities, grounds void of much landscaping, unimpressive roadways – would stay with Gibson throughout the next several years as president of the College and would influence his earliest decisions about strategic plans and funding. “You never get a second chance to make a first impression” was a phrase many at the College heard Gibson say after his inauguration in 1993.

They would hear the phrase “best possible college” more. Borrowing the words of Maryville College fifth president Dr. Samuel T. Wilson, Gibson, during his inauguration address, recommitted Maryville’s resources to make the College “the best possible college” during his tenure.

Recently, *FOCUS* Editor **Karen Beaty Eldridge ’94** interviewed the president about the last 17 years, focusing especially on those areas of growth and improvement in which he takes greatest satisfaction. (See “Points of Pride” stories throughout this section.) Below are portions of that interview.



PHOTO BY PETER COATS '09



YEARS Making Maryville *‘the best possible college’*

INTERVIEW WITH THE PRESIDENT

FOCUS: THINK BACK TO YOUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THE COLLEGE.

GIBSON: Driving around campus that first visit was daunting – no question about that. And I think that first visual impression was pretty indicative of the kind of challenge that it was going to be. Carnegie was under construction, so that was the one hopeful sign that I saw of the physical condition of the campus, but buildings were obviously dilapidated. I thought Bartlett was a deserted building when I saw it. My first impression was that definitely there was much, much work to be done on the campus and the buildings.

FOCUS: BUT YOU HAD RESEARCH THAT INDICATED THE ACADEMICS WERE STRONG.

GIBSON: Yes, although I think I really was more confident of that after I got here than before the fact. I’ve never been afraid of a challenge; in fact, life is more interesting when you have a challenge. I enjoy making things happen that need to happen. Certainly one of the things that struck me after I got here was how nearly alike the statistics were with Roanoke when I got there and the statistics here with freshman retention and graduation rate. They were in better financial condition there, but they weren’t financially flush by any means. But they also had a lot of deferred maintenance just as we did here. And that made me confident that we could turn the picture around here and that it wouldn’t take that long to do it. At Roanoke, we had moved

from that kind of condition to a much, much improved condition in about five years. So I had some idea from that about how long we could expect it to take not to be at perfection, but to be at a place where we were confident that the future would be better than the past had been.

FOCUS: WHAT WERE SOME OF THE THINGS THAT YOU KNEW NEEDED TO BE ADDRESSED?

GIBSON: I would have said I was struck by the poor condition of the campus and buildings. And a lot of that was deferred maintenance, but a lot of it was just not doing things that didn’t cost much money that could be done. ... I felt there was work to do on the church relationship. We had a chaplain at that point, but I didn’t feel that there was a high level of attention given to the church relationship. And of course, the financial position of the College

was atrocious. And I knew there was a lot of work to do there. But the financial position was more a function of enrollment than it was of endowment. That’s a mistake a lot of people make – they think the wealth of a college being in its endowment, and that’s true at a place like Berea or the University of Richmond or someplace that has hundreds of millions (or even billions of dollars in the endowment), but at most small colleges, far more money comes from tuition, and that means enrollment, and enrollment was another big problem; in fact, the most fundamental problem that we had, I would say. Enrollment hit the bottom in the mid-1980s here, and there had been a couple of years of big enrollment gains after [ninth president] Dick Ferrin came here as president, but then that stopped. And the year I came, there had been about a 10 percent

Point of Pride: IMPROVED TOWN-GOWN RELATIONSHIP

PRESIDENT GIBSON: "When I became president in 1993, I wouldn't have identified our town-gown relationship as a problem. But I've had so many people to tell me over the last year that they think this relationship is stronger now than it ever has been, so I take a lot of satisfaction in that. It's very important for a college to have a good relationship with the community around it. I've long said that I want us to be seen as an appreciating asset in the community, and I think that is largely true."

Evidence abounds to support Gibson's and others' claims that the College and surrounding communities are working together to improve life in Blount County and beyond.

During Gibson's tenure, many programs have been implemented or expanded that take the College's expertise and manpower out into the community. Perhaps the best examples of this are the growth of the Bonner Scholars Program, which annually sends approximately 60 students to area service organizations, where they volunteer at least 17,000 hours; and the Center for Strong Communities, which aids local non-profits by coordinating professional development opportunities and community-based research projects led by MC professors.

The Center for Calling & Career, opened in 2002, has been more intentional about matching students with local businesses and non-profits for internships and practica experiences, as well as job placements.

With additions and improvements in facilities and the beautification of campus grounds, more and more organizations and businesses from the community are coming to the College for their meetings, conferences and fundraisers. Leadership Blount, a community leadership enhancement and development program, now operates from campus office space in Alexander House.

But when the Clayton Center for the Arts officially opens on the campus in March, many will view the \$47-million facility for the fine arts as the strongest symbol of extraordinary town-gown relations. Constructed through a partnership of the College, the cities of Maryville and Alcoa and state and federal governments, the Clayton Center will involve representatives of the partners in its governance.

drop in enrollment between the previous fall and the fall when I arrived. So, a lot of work to do in enrollment. And the other thing that I noted was that there were a lot of empty slots on our Board of Directors. We had 10 empty slots on the Board when I got here, so that was going to be a big challenge to find 10 good people and attract them to the Board.

FOCUS: ARE YOU SATISFIED THAT THESE ISSUES HAVE BEEN ADDRESSED DURING YOUR PRESIDENCY?

GIBSON: I think all of them have been addressed. If you ask me if we've done all of the things that I dreamed we might do, I'd have to say there are still things on those

fronts that I think we can continue to work on. We've not yet met our enrollment goal for the last strategic plan, so we need to work on that. And Board building is going to be a constant, I think. At this point, the Board building is more a matter of finding the right people with the fit for the time that we're in than it is having the numbers there. And of course, the financial position you always want to improve. If the stock market does not decline sharply again, we will be at the \$55-million mark by the time of my retirement. And I think there's always work to do on the matter of church relationship, but we've made such great strides there.



FOCUS: WHAT DO YOU WISH SOMEONE HAD TOLD YOU BEFORE YOU TOOK THE PRESIDENCY AT MARYVILLE COLLEGE?

GIBSON: You know, there were no big surprises. I knew there were financial problems, of course, but it took longer to get sound financial footing than I had expected it to because we were in a little worse position than I had thought before I came in. A nice surprise was what a collegial atmosphere we had on campus. That was one thing that was very different than the other places that I had been.

FOCUS: WHAT STRUCK YOU AS DISTINCTIVE ABOUT MARYVILLE COLLEGE?

GIBSON: The first year I was here, I visited about two-thirds of the faculty in their offices, one-on-one. And I asked each of them "What do you think makes this place distinct?" And every single one of them cited collegiality. Because I had never experienced that, I would have put "collegial" way down on a list of quality indicators in describing most colleges I had known. But eventually, after I heard this from so many people, it struck me that [collegiality] is a real distinguishing feature because this is so uncommon. The other thing that struck me after I'd been here for a

little while was that Maryville was college that was more devoted to liberal arts education, had a better understanding of a liberal arts education and a more persistent sense of mission than any place that I had seen. I remember saying not long after I'd gotten here that I believed if Isaac Anderson came back, he would still recognize the College as pursuing pretty much the same mission that he had in mind for it. And I would have to say that at most liberal arts colleges, a majority of the faculty and staff know little about the history of the place, and they have a very incomplete understanding of what a liberal arts education is, even though that's where they make their living.

FOCUS: AND YOU'VE SAID YOU NOTICED A DIFFERENCE IN THE ALUMNI HERE.

GIBSON: I did, sure. Rachel and I attended the April meeting of the Alumni Banquet after I knew we were coming here, but we hadn't moved here yet. We sat at that banquet and came out of the banquet, shaking our heads. We had never felt that kind of spirit in a place before. And we've sensed that [spirit] as we've traveled around the country and met with groups of alumni. There's just



Point of Pride: ENROLLMENT GROWTH

PRESIDENT GIBSON: "I'm certainly pleased that we've had the enrollment growth that we've had because that's so fundamental to everything else. ... And we've seen some improvement in student quality. Take high school GPA average, which is the most reliable indicator of success – the first year I was here, that was 3.17. Now, that number is about 3.55, 3.56, somewhere in that neighborhood. That is a significant improvement. Looking at the ACT test scores, the average has gone from 22.9 to 24.4 this year. That's a healthy increase."

Even before he moved into his office in Anderson Hall during the summer of 1993, Gibson knew what the College's fundamental problem was: Enrollment.

That fall, the total headcount was 752 – certainly not a historic low for modern-day MC, but in order for the College to operate efficiently and fund some necessary improvements, he knew that the student body had to grow. Going into his second fall, enrollment increased by 91, and gains were reported nearly every year after that. In the fall of 1999, the campus celebrated surpassing the 1,000-student mark, and in the fall of 2008, it celebrated a total headcount of 1,176, which is an enrollment record that still stands.

Raising enrollment numbers while also bringing in better-prepared students is no easy task, but both goals were included in the two strategic plans completed under Gibson's leadership. He and his vice presidents worked to recruit – and retain – those students who were good fits for the institution.

The Window of Opportunity Strategic Plan, approved by the Board in 2002, called for an enrollment of 1,200 by 2007. Gibson admits that there is still work to do on the enrollment front – and a related issue, reputation. Enrollment and retention goals are included in the new Bridge to Distinction Plan. (See page 7.)

In the fall of 2008, MC celebrated a total headcount of 1,176, which is an enrollment record that still stands.



something – something present in those groups that is the same wherever we are.

FOCUS: THE COLLEGE'S HISTORY – HAS IT HELPED YOU LEAD THIS PLACE?

GIBSON: I actually don't think you can be a good leader unless you know the history of a place. I think that's essential. There's always a danger, an arrogance even, in coming into a place and behaving as if you know where it should go when you don't know where it's been. And knowing the history, you learn a lot about the traditions and values that have propelled the institution to the point of where it is. Knowing the history has helped me to appreciate the College, to

admire the people who've sacrificed to get it to the point where it is now and to have a sense of what kind of future it should have.

FOCUS: WHO ARE YOUR FAVORITE HISTORICAL FIGURES FROM THE COLLEGE?

GIBSON: Well, without question, my favorite figure is Samuel Tyndale Wilson. And I have been struck by the fact that he served as president in the early 20th century at the same point that I served in this century. The starting point wasn't the same, but 100 years ago, he was the president. And that was a period of progress for the College that I think was unprecedented until we get to the 1990s and early 21st Century.

And so I admire greatly what he accomplished. Of course, you have to admire Isaac Anderson for his commitment and persistence in getting the College through those very challenging years when he served as president. I can't imagine what it was like being responsible for an institution under the adverse circumstances that he faced.

FOCUS: WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACED BY HIGHER EDUCATION TODAY?

GIBSON: I think the biggest challenge is the inability that so many colleges have to be adaptable, or nimble, in a changing world. One of the most difficult environments in which you can try to bring

change about is a college. Colleges consist of people who are committed to what they are and what they do, and they don't want to change that. Meanwhile, the rest of the world is changing. And whether we are nimble enough to examine how the world is changing and decide what we need to do in response to it, I don't know. I don't know if we're capable of that. And by "we," I mean the whole college enterprise. Just to take one example – I am not an advocate of online learning as a substitute for education, but meanwhile, we've got so many students and parents who aren't looking for an education; they're looking for a *continued on page 21*

Point of Pride: THE RENEWAL OF THE CAMPUS

PRESIDENT GIBSON: "I've had community leaders tell me that there was a time when [the College] was the last place they'd show visitors, but now it's the first place they show visitors. Certainly with the Clayton Center, that's going to be even more true in the future than it has been in the past. The [appearance of the campus] is so fundamental to everything else that we want to do – the way we attract students, the way we attract donors to the College who want to invest in and support a College that they think is sound."

When Gibson arrived on campus in 1993, the only maintenance people seemed to talk about was deferred maintenance. While many buildings were, unquestionably, in poor condition, Gibson thought a lot of cosmetic improvements could be made without much money. He set out to improve curb appeal – and, in the process, change attitudes and improve morale.

Since 1993, Maryville College has seen approximately 10 new construction projects and 30 renovations or restorations.

Carnegie Hall, a residence hall was renovated and open for students by the fall of 1993 – a project outlined in the Vision '94 campaign. The next ribbon-cutting on campus took place four years later. And nearly every year since then, the College has celebrated the openings of new or renovated facilities.

Major construction projects have included Beeson Village, the Bartlett Hall Student Center, Fayerweather Hall, a trio of new buildings for the physical plant, Lloyd Hall, the McArthur Pavilion, Gibson Hall and the Clayton Center for the Arts.

Major restorations and renovations have included the Center for Campus Ministry, House in the Woods, Alexander House, Anderson Hall (exterior), International House, the Alumni Gymnasium and Davis, Gamble and Copeland residence halls.

All playing fields and courts have seen improvements. Numerous spaces inside Cooper Athletic Center (including the swimming pool) have also been repaired, restored or reconfigured.

Additionally, the College purchased the Court Street Apartments and assumed ownership of the Chilhowee Club. Morningside, the former home of the college's presidents, was leased to Ruby Tuesday, which renovated it as "RT Lodge," building complementary facilities and improving the surrounding gardens and grounds.

A campus beautification plan, implemented in 2002, resulted in new campus entrances, new landscaping, underground utilities, curbing and reconfigured parking, new entrance and ticket booths at Honaker Field, and an expanded and enhanced Humphreys Court.

The projects have been funded mostly through donor gifts and bond issues.





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diploma. And if they can get a diploma by online learning and it's an easier path, then what do you think they're going to be doing? And we see more and more and more of that going on. If we ever get to the point where enough people turn to online learning rather than learning on a residential campus, then the colleges are out of business. So I think that's a really big challenge. And I think it's made more dangerous by the fact that not enough people recognize it as a challenge. I'm not saying we should be conformed to the world – I'm saying we should take a realistic look at what's going on and decide what we do in the face of that.

FOCUS: ANY OTHER CHALLENGES?

GIBSON: I think a lot of people would say "how we're going to be able to afford education" is one, but a lot of that concern is perception rather than reality because people are just looking at

what the list price is for going to college. And I have not seen a lot of evidence that cost has become a serious impediment to people attending college. Now, it could become so. We certainly have greatly diminished government support for education. Federal support for education has not nearly kept pace with the rising cost of education. By "cost of education," I mean what it costs colleges to educate the students. But, at this point, there are so many different financial aid programs – in particular, those where college provides the discount up front, out of support out of their own funds. I don't see a danger of a collapse at this point in the financial structure and, therefore, the access to college. I don't see [financial access to college] as a major challenge to education in this century.

FOCUS: WHAT HAVE BEEN THE MOST CHALLENGING/MOST FRUSTRATING PARTS OF THIS JOB?

GIBSON: I think I'd have to say

that inertia is the most frustrating part of the job. It's frustrating to know, or to feel I know, what needs to be done and to have resistance to it because people can't imagine changing anything. But that's always been true, I think, in academe and not just at this college. At most colleges, there is almost automatic resistance to any new idea.

FOCUS: WHAT HAVE BEEN THE MOST REWARDING PARTS OF THIS JOB?

GIBSON: I would have to say the most enjoyable part has been working in an atmosphere that was incredibly collegial, where I felt trust and collegiality were the prevailing quality of the environment. That does as much to ease the challenge of leadership as inertia does in the opposite direction. Also, the satisfaction I felt in discovering that we had developed a culture of planning here. I think most people who work at the college – faculty or staff – can't imagine a future that



Point of Pride: GAINS IN FUNDRAISING

PRESIDENT GIBSON: "You always want to improve the financial position. If the stock market does not decline sharply again, our endowment will be at the \$55-million mark by the time of my retirement. That's still not where we need to be; we need to have at least \$100 million right now. Ideally, we need to have that much, but, there's always work to do on the financial front."

The value of Maryville College's endowment in 1993 and for five years prior to that was around \$12.5 million. It hadn't grown because College administrators were spending all of the money that was being earned by the endowment to operate the College. Gibson soon called for a halt to that practice, and the MC2000 Plan outlined a specific fundraising goal for endowment (\$2.2 million), as well as funding for two bricks-and-mortar projects and ongoing support of the Annual Fund (now called the Maryville Fund). The original MC2000 campaign fundraising goal was \$14 million but was soon raised to \$16 million when it became clear that the endowment growth would be surpassed.

In the end, the campaign raised \$22.2 million. During this period, the College also secured major grants from the Kresge and Teagle foundations and the U.S. Department of Education.

"Expanding the circle of friends" has become an overarching goal during Gibson's tenure, and several new programs have been put into place to assist

donors in their philanthropy and to recognize donors' support.

Emphasis was placed on adding members to the President's Circle, a society that recognized donors who contributed \$1,000 or more to the College annually.

The College's Society of 1819 was begun in 1997 with the intent to recognize and provide assistance to those donors who include the college in their estate and financial plans. Today, its membership numbers more than 265.

More focused programs to encourage senior class gifts and reunion class gifts have also aided MC's fundraising during the Gibson years. And both have led to growth in the College's Calvin Duncan Society, a group of alumni who, individually, make a promise to make a gift of some amount to MC each and every year of their lives. The Calvin Duncan Society was begun by the Class of 2002.

With the adoption of the Window of Opportunity Strategic Plan in 2002, planning began for what would become the most ambitious campaign ever undertaken at Maryville College. The \$83.3-million goal for the Window of Opportunity Campaign is more than Maryville College raised over the entire 20th Century, and almost four times the amount secured by the MC2000 Campaign. To date, the College has raised more than 93 percent of the goal. (Gibson outlines campaign progress in greater detail on page 26.)

Point of Pride: A CULTURE OF PLANNING

PRESIDENT GIBSON: "Progress consists of three steps: Dreaming, planning and acting. If you leave out any one of them, you don't succeed. ... I've seen people at other places spend a lot of time creating a strategic plan that goes on a shelf and does not guide anybody on a day-to-day basis, and not much ever comes of it. The first strategic plan we ever had was the MC2000 Plan, and there were people who were very dubious of what we would accomplish. I remember one person asking, 'Well, how much of this are we going to achieve?' And I said, 'Well, all of it. That's why we have it in the plan.' But that culture of planning is so important, and I knew we had arrived in that regard when the MC2000 Plan was complete, and I went to a faculty retreat and someone asked, 'Well, what are we going to do now that we don't have a strategic plan?'"

Upon his arrival on the Maryville College campus, Gibson didn't waste any time in getting people at the College headed in the same direction. Board minutes from the September 1993 meeting show adoption of the "Maryville College 2000" planning process. By his inauguration a month later, Gibson was already calling on people to help make Maryville "the best possible college."

The MC2000 period began in 1993, when various campus constituencies gathered for aspiration exercises and began asking themselves, "What would we like Maryville College to look like in the year 2000?" Aspiration exercises revealed that the College needed improvement in 11 areas, including reputation, enrollment and financial resources. When various groups of stakeholders were gathered in 2000 to "grade" the accomplishments of the MC2000 Plan, five areas received As, three received Bs and three received Cs.

And as the MC2000 Plan was wrapping up, work was beginning on the next strategic plan, which would be called the Window of Opportunity Plan after a quote from the late Baxter Lee. A member of the College's Board of



Directors, Lee said, in 1998, that Maryville College "had a window of opportunity to go on to greatness."

A Traditions and Values Commission was convened on campus in early 2000, and nearly 120 people from the College's various constituencies served on 10 different commissions. They formulated 29 objectives. The result was four "windows," or vision statements, that outlined aspirations in reputation, the campus community, the faculty and staff and the learning environment.

Action plans were crafted, and Cabinet members and senior-level administrators were charged with monitoring progress.

"Never in Maryville's history have so many people engaged in dreaming about and planning for a greater future for the College," Gibson said when the plan was unveiled.

Six years later, the College would gather again to begin talks for a strategic plan that would position Maryville as a college of distinction. (See page 7.)



is not addressed in intentional way by a plan of some sort. And hearing stories – particularly from alumni – has been very rewarding. It's helped me to get to know the College because, again, it's not just the College of today but the College that preceded this one that's important to know. And those stories helped more than the history books in some ways (or the period of history that they cover).

FOCUS: WHAT INITIATIVES/ PROJECTS/PROGRAMS DO YOU HOPE YOUR SUCCESSOR CARRIES ON?

GIBSON: I hope that the commitment to planning continues. I hope the commitment to the town-gown and church relationships continues. But I've long learned that you can't have too many aspirations for what comes after. You just hope you leave things in good enough condition that they will serve as a solid foundation for the future.

... Whoever follows me is going to have his or her own values and aspirations, but I certainly hope that that person will take the time to get to know the history of the College and continue with those practices that I think can lead the College to the kind of destination that it deserves.

FOCUS: THE AVERAGE COLLEGE PRESIDENCY LASTS ABOUT 5-7 YEARS. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT?

GIBSON: As an explanation, it probably comes from two things: One is the frequent aspirations of presidents to move up. In other words, to use one college as a stepping stone to another college. If they do that, they didn't come in with a commitment to the college; they came in with a commitment to their careers. I don't relate to that. I've had long staying power in any place where I've been because I've never come

in looking to use that [opportunity] as a way to get somewhere else. Secondly, I think there is a tendency to view the next president coming in as the salvation – the antidote to whatever had gone on that they didn't like with the last president. And if that new person doesn't come in and solve all of the problems they perceive right away, they grow impatient, and then there's pressure on that side. I tend to divide people who want to become college presidents or vice presidents, for that matter, into two groups: There are the people who want to be something and the people who want to do something. The people who want to be something are the kind who use the college as a stepping stone. The people who want to do something measure their time more in terms of what gets accomplished. So, after big challenges are checked off, they eventually

reach a point where they can say, "I've just about done what I set out to do."

FOCUS: WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO IN RETIREMENT?

GIBSON: More time to write and travel, primarily. And there may be other things that I'll get involved in. A lot of retired college presidents do consultation and that kind of thing, but I haven't actually started looking into any of those opportunities in any intentional way at this point. Rachel and I do plan to stay in Maryville. We own our home, all of the children are here, and we like the community. There's no incentive to move elsewhere.

FOCUS: WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO WRITE?

GIBSON: I'd like to do a revision of *Good Start*, the book that I published when I was dean at Roanoke. I started doing some work on adding a chapter on teaching



Point of Pride: STRENGTHENING OF THE COLLEGE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH



PRESIDENT GIBSON: "There are good indications that many of the other Presbyterian colleges consider us to be sort of a model with regard to church relations. We have a [Faith and Learning] Statement that was approved by the Board and the faculty. ... I think an important contribution to society can be made by colleges that have thought through what the moral implications of education should be as part of preparation for citizenship and leadership, and we are delivering that in a very intentional way."

Gibson was impressed by the College's Statement of Purpose when he first read it. He believed it to be clearly rooted in the Christian tradition, but wondered if the College lived by it and took it seriously. He formed a Faith and Learning Committee and tasked members to find ways to bring into harmony the rhetoric in the statement and what happens on the campus on a day-to-day basis. The result was a Faith and Learning Statement that explains the College's "church relatedness" and describes a campus environment that provides a quality education in a "spiritually reflective and ethically responsible manner."

In 2000, the College welcomed its inaugural Board of Church Visitors to campus, and a year later, it welcomed a director of church relations who began strengthening existing relationships with the PC(USA) Church and individual congregations locally, regionally and nationally, while building new relationships with other churches.

The Initiative on Vocation, launched in 2002 and initially funded through a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., has enabled students to explore the underlying theological and philosophical roots of vocation and given them opportunities to explore possible callings in the ministry. The initiative has also funded scholarships, ministry-focused dinners, seminary trips, retreats for pastors and current MC students, and a summer program for high-school students.

The College's relationship with the Church has also been strengthened by Gibson's two terms on the board of the Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities.

at a church-related college, which is not in the [original]. A lot of stuff in the book is out of date now, and I need to go back and work on that. But I like other kinds of writing, too. I started writing a novel many years ago, and I'd write for a while and put it aside, and I finally got all of it done except for what I think are two chapters – but it's not the two chapters at the end; I knew how I wanted to end it. But I got to a certain point and couldn't think how to get from there to the end, so I may go back and work on that again. And I may even do some poetry again; I haven't in a long time.

FOCUS: WHAT WILL YOU MISS?

GIBSON: Well, certainly the association with students and with colleagues. Most people in this business will say that being with students takes years off your age. I think that's true, so I'm sure that I'll miss the association with students and colleagues with whom I've grown close after years of work.

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