
September/October 2008

2008

9-2008

Letter from the Chancellor

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Recommended Citation

Liberty University, "Letter from the Chancellor" (2008). *September/October 2008*. 15.
https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lj_2008_sep/15

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Letter from the Chancellor

September 01, 2008 | Jerry Falwell Jr

Liberty University is commencing its 38th academic year with just over 38,000 students enrolled! For the first time in this young school's history, we were forced to cut off enrollment and start a waiting list. Enrollment in online programs now exceeds 27,000, but it was the 11,300 students enrolling in our resident program that had to be capped due to lack of space.

We are convinced that Liberty's distinctively Christian approach to higher education is the reason for continued growth, and we are committed to keeping true to the original mission.

When Liberty was founded in 1971, the mission was to create a distinctively evangelical Christian university with an educational experience equal to any major secular university. My father often used Notre Dame University and Brigham Young University as examples of achieving this goal for Catholic and Mormon young people.

He believed athletics and music were two universal languages all young people understood and used both of those tools to build Liberty.

Student singing groups traveled around the country recruiting students to the new school here in Lynchburg and the school fielded athletic teams in all the major sports from the beginning.

Today, both of these traditions continue with NCAA Division I athletics and top-quality musical programs.

To enhance academics, we are constructing 45,000 square feet of new library space in DeMoss Hall, completing our first labs for the new School of Engineering, constructing a 20,000-square-foot Barnes & Noble Christian college bookstore and constructing the 750-seat Towns Lecture Hall for ministry.

Donors have stepped forward like never before to help fund these academic improvements. Several local major nuclear power companies have assisted the School of Engineering. Barnes &

Noble is providing funding for the new bookstore and our own Dr. Elmer Towns, with the help of Andy Barrick, persuaded hundreds of alumni to help fund the lecture hall.

Director of Athletics Jeff Barber is actively promoting an athletic facilities upgrade with his Fulfill the Dream Capital Campaign. We have reorganized our Development Office to support athletic fundraising and to coordinate all other university fundraising and alumni relations.

The 5,000 acres of undeveloped mountain land adjacent to LU was acquired by the university in the 1970s to ensure it had the necessary space to meet its goals of one day enrolling tens of thousands of students. My father began calling it “Liberty Mountain” as soon as the school acquired it, and it is now becoming the epicenter of a host of new organized student activities, physical education and recreation.

The property remaining undeveloped for so long was no coincidence. We believe God was in the sequence of events that led state Sen. Robert Russell to buy most of the farms on the mountain in the early 1900s and hold the property for many years before selling it to a national timber company that held it until Liberty acquired it in the 1970s.

Developers have expressed interest in the mountain for residential projects, golf courses, condominiums and other uses — but we decided that God gave us this unique property to help recruit students here. We have built 60 miles of hiking, biking and running trails in the last year and have searched the world over for new and exciting ideas on how the land can best benefit the university.

When Tim and Beverly LaHaye donated the LaHaye Ice Center to LU, Mrs. LaHaye stated her goal to give prospective students every possible reason to choose Liberty University and the Christian educational experience it provides.

Our goals for Liberty Mountain are the same.

We recently announced that a generous donation is making it possible to construct this nation’s first year-round snow skiing facility on the mountain. We also announced that a local donor is funding the construction of an indoor soccer facility at the LaHaye Student Center, and a new student union is being added there as well.

We see all these improvements and activities as a continuation of Liberty’s original plan to use sports and music to enhance the educational experience. Only a handful of students are talented enough to play intercollegiate sports but everybody can participate in the intramural sports and club sports that the new facilities will accommodate.

These are wonderful days at Liberty, and I am honored and humbled to play a role in what God is doing in the lives of young people here at the “world’s most exciting university.”