

## Conversation about the College 10.29.11

Michael Kiefer, Vice President for Institutional Advancement:

“Hello, everybody. Come in. Welcome. This is Founder’s Great Hall. I’m Michael Kiefer, and I’m very happy to welcome you here. We have these conversations every year. We haven’t had them for 178 years, but we have them most years on Family and Friends weekend. But, this year is very special, because we have a woman president to lead us in this discussion, and we’re very happy about that. Joanne Creighton stepped down in June 2010 as president of Mount Holyoke College after nearly 15 years of service to that institution. She began her one-year appointment to Haverford in August of this year. At Mount Holyoke, Joanne led two comprehensive and highly consultative planning processes, received unanimous faculty and board of trustees’ endorsement and gendered renewed institutional strength and vitality. In 2010 the board of trustees of the college named the college’s new residence hall in her name and recognition of her distinguished presidency, a presidency during which she raised a lot of money and during which the endowment in the campus had showed very handsome growth. Prior to her tenure at Mount Holyoke, Joanne served Wesleyan University in Connecticut as Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, and professor of English from 1990 to 1994, and one year, ’94–’95, just before going to Mount Holyoke, she served as interim president. Before that she worked for many years at Wayne State and University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She is a native of Wisconsin, she is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, she has a Master’s degree from Harvard and a PhD in English Literature from the University of Michigan. She has honorary degrees from Smith, Mount Holyoke and Wesleyan, and continues to hold tenure as a professor of English at Mount Holyoke. She’s the author of many books of literary criticism, and has concentrated much of her scholarly work on the authors William Faulkner, Margaret Drabble and Joyce Carol Oates. She is an advocate for the liberal arts and the education of girls and women worldwide. I know I speak for my colleagues, who are here on campus, in saying that we are really delighted to have Joanne here at Haverford with us. She is a calm and confident and experienced educator, and we are enjoying and benefiting from her time here with us, as you will soon appreciate. Please give her a warm welcome.”

Dr. Joanne V. Creighton, President of Haverford College:

“Well thank you, Michael, for that very warm and flattering introduction. I’m going to make a few remarks and then open it up to conversation with us all, and I have here the senior staff of the institution, so I have a great backup team. Those of you who attended my talk yesterday have a fuller introduction to me, the interim president, sometimes referred to simply as ‘the interim,’ which is the first time I have had my identity defined as a duration of time. But there’s a lot to be said for it, this transient but not inconsequential state of being. It’s a great pleasure and privilege to be here, and I feel confident that all will be well because there are so many good people and

such good stuff going on here already. So, during this interim period under the interim, all I need to do is help to draw us around shared values, goals and purposes, and to keep moving forward.

Yesterday in my talk I situated Haverford within the broad context of American higher education and noted what is particularly striking about the liberal arts colleges as a group, and about this college in particular, [is] how it stands out as exemplary among an exemplary group of the very best institutions in the country. Let me just say a couple things in repetition of that, and then move on to talk about goals and priorities for this year. Haverford has many institutional assets that help it to be distinctly Haverford. I'm going to list just eight of them quickly. Academic excellence is the first and the most important; this fundamental, deep abiding commitment to it and reputation for it. Two: strong students. It has the luxury to be highly selective in choosing exceptional, talented students who are animated by intellectual curiosity, moral passion. In a very real sense, the students make the institution, along with the faculty—the third great strength—an excellent faculty of scholar-teacher mentors who care about their research, who care about their teaching, and who draw students into a shared enterprise. Four: a learning environment that is intense, intimate and rigorous, and enhanced by the small size of the institution. Five: the campus is really a stunning campus—although less stunning today—and a really marvelous place that infuses your experience of the institution. I can say that from personal experience already. Not only beautiful, but highly functional, and we're working to make it even more functional. Six: Location. The location is very fortuitous. It's both bucolic, campus-based, at the same time it's connected to a metropolitan area, and that makes a difference to a lot of students, so it has the best of both of those worlds. In fact, my seventh point: Connections. The College is connected in multiple ways, especially to its partner institutions, Bryn Mawr and Swarthmore and also Penn, and we're building connections with other institutions as well. So this allows students to have both the advantages of the small size of the institution as well as the buzz of the larger student community and faculty, to have that. And, an honor code.

At the core of the institution is a living honor code that infuses both academic and social life. In fact, arguably, that is the greatest distinctive aspect of this college, those Quaker-rooted values that are passed down from generation to generation and are now part of Haverford's life. Those values were articulated beautifully by Isaac Sharpless in 1888. I love to read this, so I'm going to read it: a quotation that is often cited, 'For your consciences and your judgments we have not sought to bind; And see you to it that no other institution, no political party, no social circle, no religious organization, no pet ambitions put such chains on you as would tempt you to sacrifice one iota of the moral freedom of your consciences or the intellectual freedom of your judgments.' And that valuing of both intellectual and moral freedom, or the intellectual and moral purposefulness, I think is very distinctively Haverford. It helps to make Haverford Haverford, and I have loved seeing the way students pass on those values, upperclassmen and -women to new students and Customs week. And I have been impressed by testimonials from

board members about those values and how they infused their lives and transformed them as individuals. So that is a very important thing. Being ‘Haverfordian,’ it is sometimes referred to.

So I think of us as helping Haverford to be more quintessentially Haverford as our preeminent goal for this year, and to do that by coming together around those shared values, bolstering these significant strengths, moving forward with dispatch on important projects and goals. All of this while the search for the next president takes place. The goal is to have no break in institutional momentum during the interim under the interim. So let me get to some of the specific goals, priorities and projects for the year. Let’s start with what you probably saw on your way up from the parking lot. It might not look like much yet, but that construction site is going to be transformed into two new 88-bed, student residences, one named in honor of the former president Tom Tritton, the other for the family of the benefactor Michael Kim. These are the first new dorms since 1968, so 44 years since there have been new dorms, and since that time the state of the art for residence life has changed somewhat. There’s now a premium on shared space, and these buildings deliver that. There’s—now in this world that we live in, and the students feel passionately about—environmental responsibility, and these buildings are green. These projects are important for Haverford, because the College is somewhat larger, not dramatically so, but by about a hundred students larger than it was about ten years ago, and so we have accommodated additional students in not-so-great ways, such as turning lounges into bedrooms, and so on and so forth. This will give us a chance to redo those, so there will be maintenance and modernization in the current residence halls, at the same time there will be a kind of spreading out ability to adjust to greater space and decompress the student body.

Another physical project in the planning stages is directly across from us on Founders Green: the old [Ryan] gym, which is a beautiful building on the outside. It has a few offices. It serves very well, I understand, for a lineup for commencement for graduating seniors. But, other than that, it is underused as a building, and we’d like to get more out of it. It’s a prime location on campus. So, I’ve just put together a committee, and planning is rapidly going to get underway— in fact, just started—for the transformation of that space into a new academic center, digital commons, media commons, which will, we hope, if designed correctly, will be the vibrant heart of the campus. It will be a center for centers; a combination of social space, home for the Center of Peace and Global Citizenship and the Hurford Humanities Center, and possibly future centers such as the new office for academic resources that’s just getting planned this year. And then there’s a library not very far away, and we’re also advancing that planning. What does the library of the future look like? Will it be on your phone? How can the cherished, but dated Magill Library be adapted to the changing demands of information today? Could some portion of the holdings that are in Magill move over to the information commons, the digital commons? So we’re trying to think about what synergies that might exist among these buildings. So exploring the creative synergy brought on by the technological and global revolutions [is] very much part

of thinking about information today. The centers are a great strength of the institution. They are just one example of academic innovation that is constantly reinventing itself.

Another new addition to our program is the academic minor in Environmental Studies, and I had the pleasure recently of meeting three young faculty who are now affiliated with that program. It's the first Tri-Co administered academic program that's equally owned by Haverford, Bryn Mawr and Swarthmore. We also continue to explore many other academic and administrative connections among our institutional partners with those two institutions, Penn, as I mentioned, with other institutions. An actual connecting of our institutions is going on in technology. We are committed to building a new registration system jointly with Bryn Mawr, and this should be very facilitating for students who want to take classes or programs on each other's campuses. I've been meeting with students in ice cream socials recently, and I have enjoyed this tremendously. One of the things that really impressed me about it is how many of them are taking classes or programs on the other campuses. So this really is a marvelous opportunity to have a greater breadth of intellectual, social offerings, by having the connections among these institutions, yet each retaining its distinctive identity.

Another area that we are looking at critically this year with a formal review is the Career Development Center; this is joint with Bryn Mawr as well. We want to ensure that we're doing all that we can to prepare students for their chosen careers. By 'we,' I mean the College and all of its 13,000 alumni who are eager to be helpful as well. As I said in my talk yesterday, we are committed to the liberal arts here and we believe strongly that the liberal arts are the best preparation for life and the multiple careers that one is likely to have these days. But in that, you know I could reiterate that in that the liberal arts helps to develop the skills, the knowledge, the critical thinking, the quality of mind, the reflective habits, the ethical perspectives, the adaptability to change that are needed in the modern world. But, we also know that we need to help your sons and daughters negotiate the world, and so there is more emphasis being placed on career development offices, rightly so, and on internships and on connections of various sorts between curriculum and career. The centers certainly help with that as well.

It's also a year that we're engaging with cost. I guess every year one engages in cost. Haverford, like most private colleges and universities, is contending with the rising cost of educating your sons and daughters in this residential setting. Very enriched, very expensive to have such a low (8:1) student-to-faculty ratio, for example. But, I'm happy to report that we feel well that the budget is well in control for this year and for next year, but over the long haul we are looking at the major challenges that face the institution, the tradeoffs that must be evaluated over the longer run. And for our financing we depend quite literally on the loyalty and support of the alumni who give back generously to the institution. So that every student has a scholarship essentially, that [the] education of every student costs more than that very high sticker price, and as a result we depend on that generosity on the part of alumni, and so we are in the process of planning a

campaign. We're in the quiet, early phase of a comprehensive fundraising campaign. It will focus on making Haverford the best Haverford it can be: enriching academics with more faculty and course offerings, adding to and enhancing our physical spaces, such as those that I just mentioned: the academic digital commons, the library, endowing financial aid so that all qualified students are able to attend, regardless of their ability to pay. The Board of Managers and other leaders are determined to step up themselves and to put their money where their heart is. The goal is to keep moving during this interim year, getting pre-campaign commitments so that when the next president arrives there will be a nucleus bond and a campaign already to go into public phase very quickly.

So finally let me say something about that: about the search for 'Number 14'—which is the way they refer to the next president around here, which you may note is another transitory term that reminds us presidents that we are only passing through while the institution is forever. The College Board of Managers has appointed a search committee consisting of representatives from all the constituent groups of the College: the board, the alumni, the students, the faculty, the staff. This committee has just selected, as of yesterday, a search firm to assist in the process of finding and vetting and matchmaking. While it's a little late in the search process—sometimes searches for presidents start earlier than this—I am confident. I know that there will be many wonderful individuals who would jump at the chance to have such a wonderful job at such a terrific institution as this. It's certainly one of the best jobs, if not *the* best job in higher education. And, I've been assured that he or she will be ready to move into 1 College Circle, which is where I'm living right now, on July 1st of next year. When that moment comes, I will pass the gavel to Number 14, and my interim status will fade away like the Cheshire cat, and I will reappear as the professorial self in the life in Massachusetts that I interrupted to join you here. I'm sure Number 14 will bring fresh energy and ambition to the job, and be as impressed as I am by what an extraordinary institution this is with such strong legacies. As I said, I'm sanguine about the transition because there are such strong people here, so the institution is in good hands: all of your students, the faculty, the staff, the alumni, the Board, the parents who give their devotion. That's all I'd like to say in introduction. Now, I'd like to spend some time in conversation.

As I said, I've got my colleagues here with me. We invite questions from the floor. I'm going to introduce them in a minute, but having them up here reminds me of a story my father used to tell about himself as a young boy. He said he would boast, 'Me and my brother know everything,' and when he was asked a question that he didn't know, he would say, 'That's something my brother knows.' The trick was that he only made this boast when his brother wasn't in the room. So here, in contrast, we have all of the senior staff here. Nonetheless, I will take my chances. Given the cumulative experience of them all, I will say with a bit more confidence, 'That's something that my senior staff knows,' when you stump me. And if, collectively, we don't know the answer, we will work on it and get back to you."