
2019–20

Report of the President



Kathleen E. Harring

This year has been a year of change. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us all to adapt to new ways of doing things. This is true of our College, our families and our communities.

The pandemic has also shined a stark light on the inequities in our society. This conversation has been with us for some time, but the issues have been exacerbated by COVID-19, which has had an unequal health and economic effect on communities of color. Muhlenberg has been working toward becoming a more diverse and inclusive institution for several years (see “A Community Effort,” page 30, for more about diversity at the College), but we became much more declarative and firm in our position this summer. We did this because of the fundamental belief that we have a responsibility to our campus and our community to change.

Between the public health crisis and national reckoning on racial injustice, there has been more communication and conversation with alumni and parents than at any point in my 36 years at the College. These discussions are important, since opportunities for dialogue and discourse are central to our liberal arts mission. In reflecting on these

exchanges, I keep coming back to one particular comment from a member of our community who was feeling unsettled by everything that was happening. They were concerned there was too much change at the College.

This stuck with me because Muhlenberg, like society, is constantly changing. Change, however, does not mean that we move away from our mission and values. In fact, it’s much the opposite. A strong college—a college that lives out its mission every day—is one that adapts and transforms to the needs and interests of its students and to changes in the world in which it exists. Muhlenberg’s history is replete with change.

More than 100 years ago, Muhlenberg added the Extension School to educate non-traditional students. We remain one of the few liberal arts colleges to offer this opportunity. In 1957, the College began to admit women while most other private men’s colleges would continue as single-sex institutions for another decade or more. The opening of the Baker Center for the Arts in 1976 signaled the beginning of the rise of the performing arts at the College. Our first computer lab opened in 1982 and would change the ways that students learn and work forever. Muhlenberg became the first liberal



arts college in the nation to receive Hillel accreditation and foundation status in 2006. And a year later, the opening of the Multicultural Center created an inclusive and supportive space to foster growth in the diversity of our College community.

Of course, these are major events, but there are changes that take place every day. Last fall, our campus became smoke-, vape- and tobacco-free—the result of an effort that began with student research. We launched a number of hardship initiatives to help our students, including the Muhlenberg Useful Living Essentials or M.U.L.E. Community Cabinet and emergency student grants. These efforts recognize our growing understanding of how to effectively support student success in today's society. The College was recognized for the second time in 10 years with the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, one of only 119 colleges and universities nationwide to receive that honor. This recognition acknowledges our sustained efforts to build important connections between the College and the community while fostering a sense of civic duty among our students.

Two other initiatives at the College were recognized nationally last fall as well. The student organization BergVotes received a Silver Seal of

Excellence from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. This is a result of nonpartisan efforts to increase student participation in the election process. It reflects the work of students and their faculty and staff advisors to grow student voter registration between the 2014 and 2018 elections. Finally, the College's ongoing efforts to become more sustainable and environmentally responsible earned Muhlenberg a rating as a top performer on the Sustainable Campus Index of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.

All of these achievements reflect the constant and ongoing evolution of Muhlenberg College as a premier liberal arts institution. Most people understand that we are continually striving to be better at what we do, but some see the changes happening today and believe them to be extraordinary. But are they? Not in the context of the College's history.

When I was named a department chair many years ago, along with two other female professors, it

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brought the number of female department chairs from two to five. That was in 1993. And six years later, the College promoted three women to the rank of professor—Joan Marx (Spanish), Jadviga da Costa Nunes (art) and me (psychology)—doubling the number of women in the highest faculty rank.

In order to address issues of social injustice in our own community, we must examine our culture, policies and practices. We want to be better. We want to live up to the ideals in our mission and values. We want to be a more diverse, inclusive and equitable institution.

Think about that. In 1999, there were only six female faculty at this rank and today 25 women have achieved this accomplishment.

Muhlenberg currently has only three tenured faculty of color, with 10 in tenure-track positions. There are many myths regarding attracting and retaining faculty of color: They are in high demand so

there are bidding wars, there aren't enough of them, the business world is pulling them away. Research on faculty retention, however, shows

that perceptions of belonging, support and community are more likely the reasons why faculty of color choose to stay at or leave an institution. Having a strong support network and a sense of connection to the College is essential for students of color as well.

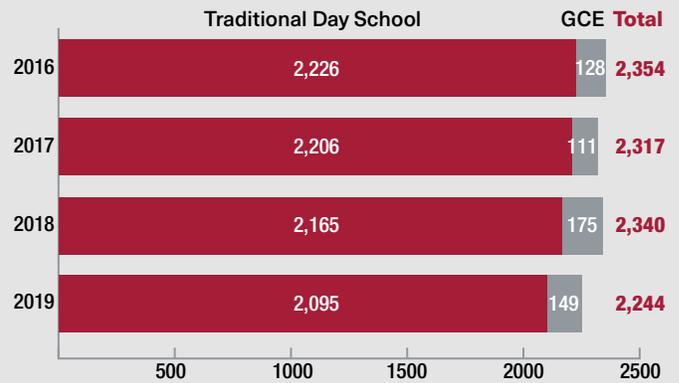
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The College's diversity plans and initiatives can be found at muhlenberg.edu/diversityatmuhlenberg. I encourage you to review these plans and the progress made over the past six years. In a community message from June 16, I outlined actions the College was taking: approval of two tenure-track positions with joint appointments in Africana studies; increased funding for the Office of Multicultural Life; expansion of the Emerging Leaders Program from a two-year program to four years; working with the Allentown Police Department as well as our own Department of Campus



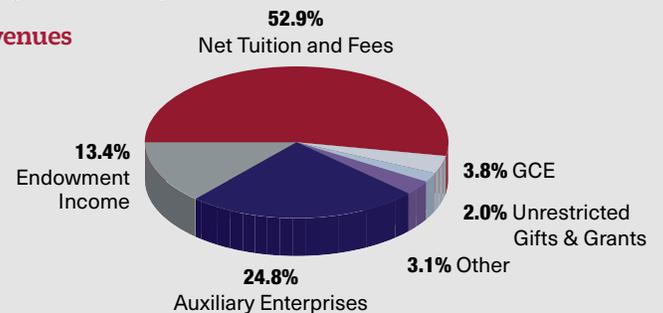
2019-20 BY THE NUMBERS

Total Fall Enrollment

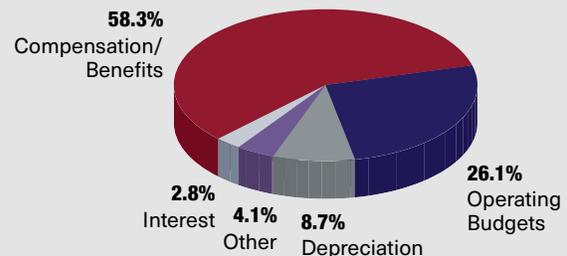


Budget Summary

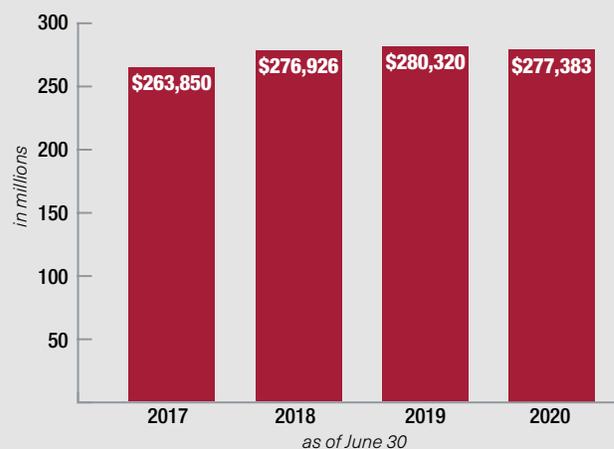
Revenues



Expenditures



Endowment Summary



Safety and Police to improve our practices and ensure all community members feel respected and welcome; broadening the scope of Presidential Diversity Innovation Grants to provide funds for anti-racist programs; and adding more opportunities for donors to support areas that improve campus life for students of color.

These are not earth-shaking initiatives and they are not the sum total of what we will do moving forward. The fact is that right now, with all of the uncertainty we face, there will be a lot of change yet to come at Muhlenberg, the kind of change that will define who we are and what we do for our next 173 years. Everything from how we teach and integrate technology to how we build community will evolve much more rapidly than at any point in our history. One thing, however, will remain true—we are a community that cares. Despite all the changes the College has had over its history, Muhlenberg has always stayed faithful to its core values. We need to make sure those values are clearly expressed in the experience of every member of the Muhlenberg family. I look forward to working with all of you to achieve this goal.