

**Lindsborg Chamber of Commerce**  
**Annual Meeting / Dinner**  
**January 26, 2010**

Thank you for the invitation to speak this evening. I am humbled and honored by the invitation.

If you will indulge me, I would like to begin by first sharing some quick facts about Bethany College's impact on Lindsborg. In other words, what Bethany College offers to the Smoky Valley. I would like to center my facts on the College's economic, cultural, and education impact.

As you know better than I, Bethany College is one of Lindsborg's largest employers with 174 full-time and part-time faculty and staff. But did you know that last year, 2009, the College's payroll to employees living in the Smoky Valley was slightly over \$3.4 million? Also, and possibly a more interesting fact, is that in 2009 Bethany College spent almost \$600,000 on vendors and suppliers located in Lindsborg. That's almost \$4 million flowing directly into the Smoky Valley economy!

Using an economic multiplier of two, Bethany College creates for the Smoky Valley an estimated economic impact in 2009 of \$8 million.

The College's cultural impact includes such events and programs as the Messiah Festival, the Mingenback Art Gallery, the various concerts, recitals, and symphonies performed by our various student performers, and, of course, the College's theatrical performances and sporting events.

What is frequently overlooked by colleges who graduate large numbers of education majors, like Bethany, is the education impact those colleges make in their immediate community and region; and, more importantly, the impact those teachers make in adding to the quality of life in the community. In fact, over the last three years, we have graduated 73 education majors, which represents 20% of Bethany's graduates during that time.

One of the areas I was asked to touch on during my remarks are my observations over the last 2½ years as both the president of Bethany College and a resident of Lindsborg.

When I visited with you two years ago, we were a long-distance family with Sheila and Quade still in Ohio. Quade is now in the First Grade at Soderstrom Elementary and loving school every day. In fact, when we had the snow day in December, I had just come inside from shoveling the driveway when Quade woke up and met me in the kitchen. I looked at him and told him, "You don't have school today." With a dejected look on his face, he asked, "Why?" – thinking he had done something wrong and was being punished. I pointed to the windows and told him to look outside. Of course, the sight of the snow completely changed his disposition.

We have taken full advantage of the wonderful programs that Lindsborg offers through its Parks & Recreation Department. Quade has played basketball, baseball, soccer, and taken swimming lessons. Thad Morrical and his many volunteers do a great job.

Sheila is also getting acclimated to Lindsborg. She is a docent at the Sandzen Gallery, a Stephen Minister at church, on the board of the Children's Center, and is treasurer for the Bethany Auxiliary.

Of course, if we weren't busy enough, today we were granted final custody of the newest member of our family, two month old Thomas.

I share all of this because the Leonard family is part of Lindsborg and Lindsborg is part of the Leonard family. We have come to appreciate and enjoy the numerous Swedish festivals and community programs you can find in this incredible town. In two years, we have fallen in love with Lindsborg.

For that reason, I want to challenge – and possibly chastise – my college colleagues and my fellow Lindsborg residents. I hear around campus and, occasionally, around town, an apology for Lindsborg. I've heard the phrase, "We're in the middle of nowhere." I would like to challenge that premise.

Last October, I traveled to Karlstad, Sweden to begin conversations with Karlstad University about a strategic partnership between them and Bethany. I spent two days in the city of Karlstad – one day visiting the city and several key figures and one day at the university. Time and again people would tell me, proudly, “I’ve been to Lindsborg” or “I know where Lindsborg is.”

I left Karlstad persuaded that Lindsborg, Kansas is a world city. I now believe “we’re in the center of everywhere!” Saint Louis is 400 miles to the east; Denver is 400 miles to the west; Dallas is 400 miles to the south. Philadelphia is 1,200 miles to the east and Los Angeles is 1,200 miles to the west. Munkfors, Sweden is 4,500 miles to the east and Midway Island is 4,500 miles to the west. Athens, Greece is 6,000 miles to the east and Tokyo is 6,000 miles to the west. Lindsborg is in the center of everywhere! Lindsborg is a world city! We should embrace that and be proud of it.

Let me finish my remarks with one more important intersection between Lindsborg and Bethany.

With the encouragement of Jim Prugh and working with Business Professor Paul Gentine, during this spring semester’s marketing research course, one of the group projects will be focusing on businesses in Lindsborg. Specifically, the project group will research how much disposable income Bethany students have, where they spend it now, where they go now and why, and what changes Lindsborg businesses might consider to have an immediate impact on the students.

I am also going to be asking the project group to research our peer colleges who are in small towns, but have a high retention rate for students from their freshmen year to their sophomore year. For example, Taylor University in Upland, Indiana – population 3,700 – has a freshmen retention rate of 87% and Cedarville University in Cedarville, Ohio – population 3,800 – has a freshmen retention rate of 83%. I would like to know what, if any, strategic town-gown partnerships exist where retention is high. In other words, we must identify those “best practice” college towns and learn from them.

Candidly, this is important because for Bethany to grow we must do a better job of retention. I want to look under every rock to learn what we are able to do.

Additionally, if we are successful as town-gown, the outcome will be a stronger Lindsborg and a stronger Bethany College. We could become the model of town and gown!

Along these same lines, I am personally learning more about the International Town & Gown Association and their upcoming annual meeting in June in Ames, Iowa. Can this association help guide Bethany and Lindsborg to an even stronger strategic partnership?

I believe as much today as I did two years ago, we must have a conversation on how Bethany and Lindsborg could do a better job of harnessing the resources of the College’s faculty and students for economic growth, business development, workforce development, or whatever is necessary to create that strategic partnership I believe is so important and so vital to our shared futures.

In closing, let me again thank the Chamber board for the invitation to speak this evening. I enjoy any opportunity I am given to talk about Bethany College and Lindsborg, Kansas. Both are wonderful places to be, to play, to live, to stay.