

Farewell to the Class of 2011

What an incredible adventure you've had these last four years.

When you arrived in August 2007 I had only been on campus a few weeks. (In fact, some of you have informed me I'm a member of the class of 2011.) If you remember that Sunday morning when you arrived, you had to park on the field between Alma Swensson and Ana Marm because the Hahn parking lot was being repaved and transformed. A week later, as part of your new student orientation, this class traveled to Greensburg, Kansas following their devastating F-5 tornado to help with the clean-up and to begin their transformation.

In hindsight, these events were a foreshadowing of your future adventure at Bethany. Some have even suggested that the class of 2011 has seen the greatest transformation of Bethany College since the early 1970's.

Your adventure and the over \$7 million campus transformation you have seen include:

- The Campus Green project which gave Bethany a new south entrance grounded by the statue of our founder Carl Aaron Swensson, new cobblestone walkways to replace old sections of First and Swensson Streets, a limestone amphitheater in the former Wallerstedt Court, a welcome pavilion and new east entrance, emergency lights across the campus, and renewed landscaping and lawns;
- In 2007, internet connectivity in the residence halls was a DSL line; that was upgraded later that fall to a T-1 line and this spring the residence halls became totally wireless and connected with a T-3 line;
- In 2007, there was one smart classroom on campus; today there are 12;
- When you arrived football was played on dirt, mud, and grass at Anderson Stadium and the soccer team practiced and played on the same grass field; today both play, and at times practice, on artificial turf;
- In fall 2008 we opened our first apartment-style residence hall, Swede Suites;
- In 2007, the college's weight room was about 1,500 square feet, then in winter 2009, the new 10,000 square feet weight room opened;
- In fall 2009, we finished the three new labs added to Nelson Science; and
- improvements to Presser Hall and auditorium that included a new elevator and renovated balcony seating.

Some of you will remember that in September of your first year, I lived with you in the residence halls and got to know many of you. In fact, one of my roommates graduates today.

When you arrived in 2007 Bethany had no formal international study opportunities. As you graduate we have six: Harlaxton College in England; University of Karlstad and Linnaeus University in Sweden; American Institute of Foreign Studies; Study Abroad Italy; and Studio Art Centers International. And one of the first Bethany students to study at Harlaxton College graduates with you today.

Several of you were on the choir tour in summer 2008. One of today's graduates took Quade on his first rollercoaster ride on that tour and several of today's graduates have babysat for Quade and Thomas.

Another member of the class of 2011 scolded me in an email about the physical plant staff killing a snake.

For the last four years you have grounded me and inspired me. Thank you.

During your adventure at Bethany, the college was challenged to raise \$1 million for a new chapel and welcome center. We met that challenge and are now two-thirds toward completing the fundraising for that project.

Sadly, during your adventure, you endured the painful loss of three classmates, who we have honored today. You were in college as the Great Recession began and bottomed out and as the US elected its first African-American president.

Also, during your Bethany adventure, the Pixar movie, *Up*, was released. If you saw the movie, or if you didn't, the movie begins with the love story of Carl and Ellie and how they met as kindred spirits when they were young. They share a passion for adventure. After a full life together, Ellie dies and leaves Carl her Adventure Book. Carl thinks the book ends on the page titled, "Stuff I am going to do." However, Carl learns Ellie had in fact lived out her adventure in full. While she never made it to Paradise Falls - that was the plan - life got in the way and she loved her life-long adventure with Carl nonetheless. Ellie leaves Carl with one final gift when she writes at the end of her Adventure Book, "Thanks for the adventure. Now go have a new one."

To the Class of 2011, I echo Ellie's words. Thanks for the adventure. Now go have a new one!