

It would be easy to believe that we live in peculiarly adventurous and perilous times. The media certainly perpetuates this notion. Not surprisingly, the World War II poster *Keep Calm and Carry On* is being revived on bumper stickers, on mugs, and on the covers of blank journals. As a historian, I am not so sure that our challenges are any greater than those of many other times and places. Nevertheless, these are *our* times and these are *our* challenges.

For us at Houghton, the external economic challenges certainly affected our endowment funds which contribute primarily to the Greatbatch School of Music and to student scholarships. It also served to alert us to our overall vulnerability created by tight budgets which allow little financial flexibility.

This past spring, the Administration appointed a Task Force on Organizational Sustainability charged with three objectives:

First, to make recommendations that would restore fiscal flexibility in the short run to allow for improvements in college programs and facilities while we are waiting for longer-term processes (e.g. endowment recovery) to take effect;

Second, to position Houghton to maintain its reputation and its role as one of the top national Christian liberal arts colleges of choice, known for its education that is both transformational and “translatable” into further professional education or directly into the marketplace. (The assumption is that prospective students should not have to choose between a rigorous academic education and a deeply Christian education!); and

Third, to align Houghton’s resources and programs to Houghton’s core mission of high quality Christian liberal arts education (mostly residential and mostly undergraduate), and to ensure excellence through the institution.

The Task Force drew on the expertise of external consultants, comparative data from the Council of Independent Colleges, the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, and the Christian College Consortium, as well as internal self studies from a number of areas of the college.

The Task Force presented a series of recommendations to our Board of Trustees in October, after sharing their recommendations for review and comment with various sectors of the internal community. The recommendations were unanimously accepted by the Board as directives for the administration to implement.

Houghton’s reputation over the past 126 years has been built by our outstanding alumni who have exercised leadership throughout the church and society in this county and throughout the world. The college is recognized for its excellence in such places as *Fiske’s Guide*, *The Princeton Guide to Small Colleges*, *Washington Monthly*, *Barron’s Best Buys*, and *Colleges of Distinction*.

We want to build on this tradition of high quality Christian liberal arts distinguished by exceptional preparation for graduate and professional education, diversity and excellence in the arts, global and

intercultural engagement, active involvement in social service, a size that permits faculty-student mentoring and research collaboration, and a culture of appreciation and stewardship of Creation.

We invite you to learn more about Houghton on our website.

*Shirley Mullen*

*President*