

September 15, 2010

On Sunday, August 29<sup>th</sup>, I shook hands with our first year students—one by one—and welcomed them to Houghton. After looking in each of their faces and hearing brief versions of their stories, I came away more confident than ever of Houghton's ability to be a leader in transformational education in today's world.

For one thing, the new students enhance the already rich global ethos of our campus. They come this year from such diverse places as China, India, Zimbabwe, Japan, Ecuador, Central Asia, Tanzania, as well as all over Canada and the United States. The richer the background of our students, the richer the peer learning environment—and the more all of our students become accustomed to the cultural complexity of the world they are entering.

Second, our new students are here because they heard about Houghton very often from an alumni connection. I was struck once again that no amount of formal marketing can match the credibility and impact of one compelling personal story about how Houghton changed a life. I am grateful to all those alumni who have told their stories to prospective students and want to encourage other alumni to do the same. This year's 92-94% return rate for all classes (the percentage of students here in the spring of 2010 who were eligible to return to campus and chose to do that) suggests that the students will find that Houghton will live up to their expectations and hopes.

Third, the new students come with a commitment of bold goals for achievement and for service in the arts, in ministry, in the sciences, in medicine, in teaching, in business—both in this country and around the world. They are preparing to make their lives count in ways that even they cannot fully imagine at this point.

Finally, I was delighted by their joyful creativity—even somewhat at my expense. The line of new students was long. One enterprising young man decided to enliven the wait by going through a second time and posing as someone other than himself. (I am fairly good at remembering faces and was vaguely aware of having seen this person before—especially the teeth because they were so straight—but was too polite and too uncertain to call him on it.) The third time he tried it—the Scandinavian name he gave seemed suspiciously incongruent with his claim to be from Russia. When I hesitated unbelievably, he broke down in laughter. Clearly, a good section of the waiting students were in on the ruse as well! After a good laugh, we went on with the reception. I expect more enterprising and more productive creativity from this young man and his friends in the days ahead.

With the commitment and giftedness of these new students and the intensity, breadth, and depth of Houghton's learning community, the world will continue to feel the healing and energizing impact of Houghton College for years to come!

Shirley Mullen, Class of 1976  
President