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Summer 2017 Letter from the President

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June 8, 2017

Dear Members of the Otterbein Community:

I am looking out on the Towers lawn on yet another incredible spring day. I see students and their parents touring campus, and I see the grounds crew working hard to keep everything shipshape. Last week I stopped in to see the renovations in Riley. It's an amazing transformation! Please stop by when you are out for a walk and admire these enhancements made possible by our generous donors. You'll also see changes in Towers Hall. I haven't been on an official tour just yet, but I am told that those updates are nearing completion and will also be transformational. I also visited the newly completed observatory and student huddle spaces in the Science Center. Both renovations provide important additions to the distinctive and varied learning environments on our campus.

We had alumni here on campus for a Cardinal Migration Staycation recently, and they were amazed by the beauty of the campus and the significant upgrades in the renovated spaces. Soon we will complete the rigging systems in Cowan. And upon their return, our students will be thrilled to discover the wireless upgrades in the residence halls, Courtright Library, and Roush Hall. Members of our ITS staff have been busy. Before we know it, we will begin Orientation sessions, the students will move in, classes will begin, and the buzz of activity around campus will take off like a rocket.

In Fiscal Year 2013 we presented a multi-year plan to the Board of Trustees. We have been strategically following the plan, and I am pleased to report that we are meeting our goals ahead of schedule. I hope that each of us will find some time during the coming weeks to appreciate all that we have accomplished as a community in recent years. Our enrollments are strong; retention has increased dramatically; the student population has grown in diversity; we recently were awarded \$500K from the AEP Foundation; and we are closing in on \$40 million toward our comprehensive campaign, the largest sum ever raised in support of Otterbein. In addition, Otterbein's student success has reached new heights – for the past two years 96% of our graduates are employed or enrolled in graduate school within six months of graduation. Another good example of student success is the achievement of our student athletes. Not only are they competitive in their sports; they also succeed in the classroom. Otterbein landed a league-high 54 student-athletes on the 2017 Academic All-Ohio Athletic Conference (OAC) list for spring season. Thanks to all of our coaches for their support of our academic mission. Many of our colleagues wish that they could lay claim to such noteworthy achievements.

Furthermore, our identity as an institution committed to a set of strong core values -- inclusion, equality, diversity, lifelong learning, opportunity, service, and sustainability – is now embraced by our incoming students. For example, their college essays include statements about “standing with Otterbein,” “standing out at Otterbein,” “standing up at Otterbein.” We have many indicators that we are making good progress toward realizing our aspiration of building a model community in higher education.

I realize, however, as does our Board of Trustees, that all of these achievements have not been without sacrifice. In order to remain affordable and accessible, we have frozen tuition for four subsequent years; for

two of the past eight years we have not given raises or one-time bonuses; we have worked to hold continuing costs steady. However, in contrast to many of our peers, we have not laid off any faculty or staff. The decision to maintain current staffing levels has been an ongoing commitment to our community. The institutions many of our colleagues serve have made a very different decision, reducing faculty and staff, sometimes significantly, to meet budget reductions.

At the April meeting of the Otterbein University Board of Trustees, the Board charged the administration with responsibility for commissioning an outside independent group to conduct a total compensation study to be completed by May 2018. If we meet our fall enrollment projections for the 2017-2018 Academic Year, the goal is to establish 1% compensation pool to be allocated beginning January 2018. As we continue to meet enrollment projections, the multi-year plan calls for setting aside a 2% compensation pool for FY19 and FY20 to address the results of the compensation study. Note that all of the assumptions built into the multi-year plan are based on consistently meeting our enrollment projections.

As we know, enrollment is an area where all of us contribute to our success. From the friendly welcomes our guests receive when they arrive on campus, to the appearance of our facilities and grounds as they tour campus, to the accuracy and clarity of the information we provide during their visit, to the follow up calls answering their questions, to our assistance in figuring out how to make an Otterbein education affordable, and so on -- we all play a critical role in the recruitment process.

Retention is also a shared responsibility. Our commitment to student success is ultimately the test of Otterbein's success, and as we have seen our recruitment and retention efforts accelerate, we are seeing improvements in the perception and understanding of the quality and character of an Otterbein education. We are also realizing the financial benefits of these successful community efforts. And, of course, we all play an important role in keeping our alumni and other supporters connected to the University. We want them to experience pride in their connections to our community and to their investments in our students and in our institution.

This brings me to the announcement of the next *Above and Beyond Award* recipient. Nominations have emerged from a variety of sources – colleagues, parents, and most recently from our alumni who have returned to campus for a visit. I am pleased to announce that for the month of May the *Above and Beyond Award* goes to **Candace Brady**. Candace has played a significant role in advancing our progress toward our campaign goal. She maintains strong and caring relationships with our alumni and donors and sets the bar high for all of us in terms of responsiveness and productivity. Thank you, Candace, for all you do on behalf of Otterbein.

I hope each of you is enjoying the beauty of early summer. Please know that your efforts are contributing to our success as an institution during a difficult time in higher education. Though challenges remain, we have the support of our Board to continue to pursue our multi-year plan, work to meet our projections, and take the next step in the development of Otterbein as a model community in higher education.

Sincerely,



Kathy A. Krendl
President