



**State of the College**  
**Fall 2021**  
***Delivered August 16, 2021***  
***9:30 a.m. Wailes Theater***

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Introduction:

We enter the fall term of the 2021-2022 academic year both reflective and anxious about the realities in world news and more directly the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 virus on the people and operations of the College. Let me briefly review:

1. We completed the 2020-2021 year successfully using a variety of teaching options including hybrid, hyflex, in-person and fully online. Thanks go to our talented faculty.
2. We also navigated testing, vaccinations, revised programming, and care for those with Covid across our campus in large part thanks to Pandemic Response Team, Dean Gerald “Jerry” Stebbins, Student Life, our nursing staff, and our athletic department (trained to administer tests).
3. The Athletic Department shifted to a detailed re-socialization program moving all formal competition from the fall to the spring term.
4. Our Building & Grounds staff worked endlessly to ensure we were sanitizing and keeping spaces free from “super spreader” environments.
5. The Dining Hall staff adjusted their seating, meal-time process, and delivery options to accommodate keeping all of our students, faculty, and staff on campus.
6. The administrative staff, together with the Pandemic Response Team (PRT), held multiple emergency planning sessions and adjusted the practice and policy of the entire campus to ensure we were able to remain solidly in the “green” within our Covid-19 warning system.
7. Our Enrollment, Communication, and Advancement staff put out timely and necessary information both on campus and off while continuing to bring in a strong class and engage alumni/donors.

The pandemic required the best of our creativity, adaptability, and innovation as an institution. I want to pause at this State of the College address to profoundly thank the entire faculty and staff (as well as our students) for the over- and-above work you have all done to date in order to ensure the life of Bethany College continues without interruption and with excellence.

A brief timeline will help keep the process in perspective as we enter yet another term under the pandemic and begin the process of re-establishing practices and policies designed to keep our campus safe over the next few weeks during move-in and the start of the new academic year.

Unfortunately, the “Delta” variant of Covid-19 will require us to return to social distancing, smaller groups, and mandated masking. We will continue to encourage vaccinations where feasible and responsible.

A short recap:

- January 15, 2020 - All international study-abroad trips were cancelled.
- March 9, 2020 - Bethany College asked its students not to return from Spring Break for two weeks. During this time, the College shifted its entire operation to multiple teaching and student life modes.
- May 2020 – Bethany College held a full virtual Graduation Ceremony.
- July 2020 – All camps and conferences were cancelled.
- August 2020 – Vaccinations were offered, and we reached an 80% vaccination rate among faculty and staff.
- August 2020 – Students returned to a residential campus with sports limited to practice sessions only and classes in multiple forms: hybrid, hyflex, online, and in person.
- October 2020 – The College held a virtual Homecoming.
- December 2020 – Bethany completed the term in the “green” of our Covid-19 warning system.
- January 2021 – All protocols in place, the College resumed as a residential campus experience.
- February 2021 – All athletic teams cancelled in the fall began spring competition on a truncated and revised schedule with tight Covid-19 protocols.
- April 2021 – Bethany College hosted the National DIII Golf and Track and Field Championships without incident and remained in the “green” with regard to Covid-19 testing.
- May 2021 – The College held an in-person Graduation with limited participants and social distancing in place, and invited back the Class of 2020 to walk with its 2021 peers.
- July 2021 – Camps and conferences resumed.
- August 2021 – The rise of the new “Delta” variant will press the College back to established Covid-19 protocols.

As we rehearse the impacts on the 2020-2021 year, I also want celebrate the College’s tremendous efforts in keeping our students connected and engaged as *#OneBethany*. As a result, our retention rate has increased to approximately 70%. We continue to press toward the goal of student retention in all of our efforts going forward.

#### Larger Institutional Accomplishments:

Let me focus now on accomplishments in 2020-2021 that are not Covid-19 based but represent the healthy life of our historic and esteemed institution:

1. *We continued our commitment to leadership development, student success, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and global engagement:*

- Developed and continued the Bethany Anti-Racism Reading and Action Group under the leadership of Dr. Brooke Deal and Dr. Holly Hilgardner;
- Developed and continued a cohort of DEI Faculty Fellows;
- Increased international student enrollment and overall retention significantly (60-68.5%);
- Continued to increase our Student Success work with our Bethany First-Year Experience and Student Success Center Planning;
- Moved our NCAA Division III Ethnic Minorities and Women’s Fellowship to a permanent full-time position under the leadership of Meighan Julbert;

2. *We focused on excellence in our academic and athletic programs:*

- Completed significant institutional capacity building with new instructional and student self-service technology (Canvas) under the leadership of Provost Joe Lane and Associate Provost Lisa Reilly, among others;
- Successfully completed our Higher Learning Commission site visit as a part of the financial turn-around of the College under the leadership of Provost Lane, Denny McMaster (CFO), Dr. Lisa Reilly (ALO), Richard Miller (Assistant Vice President for Accreditation and Institutional Accountability), and Karen Hunt (Vice President for Enrollment and Marketing), among others;
- Negotiated and began the planning phase of The Bethany School of Graduate Studies and a 4+1 MBA as well as a Low Residency Master’s Program in Cyber Security under the leadership of Dr. Anju Ramjee, Dr. Joe Lane, and Dr. Alex Mathews.

3. *We focused on the health of our campus for faculty, staff and students (and the town of Bethany):*

- We established and engaged a Pandemic Response Team (PRT) of experts across the life of the campus (Faculty, Staff, Alumni, & Board) in order to effectively direct College decisions for life, health, and safety (staying in the “green”) during the unprecedented reality of the last year under the leadership of the Dean of Students, Gerald “Jerry” Stebbins.

4. *The College attended to budget impacts of Covid-19 as well as forward planning:*

- We applied for, received, and implemented related CARES ACT: Pay Check Protection Program loan, which was converted to a grant due to the detailed attention of our Finance Office and our CFO, Denny McMaster;
- We applied for and received the CARES ACT – Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds I, II, III and are currently expecting further assistance from the American Recovery Plan all under the leadership of Denny McMaster and Grants Administrator Julie Wilson;

- We engaged new auditing partners and completed audits on time and with professional excellence under the leadership of Denny McMaster and Chris Sengewalt;
- We continued our work toward closing the USDA Commitment to refocus our College on strategic initiatives under the leadership and significant time and work of Marc Cherneko, Board of Trustee Member; Bill Kiefer, College Counsel, Bill Richter, Reed Smith Counsel, and Denny McMaster, CFO;
- We took a streamlined, line-by-line look at our institutional budget and budget practices, revising significantly to represent both our financial reality as well as ensuring we are aligning the College to strategic priorities;
- Strengthened the balance sheet to improve liquidity and tightly managed expenses: Contracts have been restructured where feasible moving from 12 month agreements to shorter annual contracts (9/10 month); reductions and pension pauses were instituted to ensure fiscal longevity;
- Reunion year affinity groups were activated and accelerated, increasing project-based and endowment fundraising; and additional financing was secured to lead Bethany College through the pandemic and related challenges.

These measures assisted us in excising more than \$750,000 from our operating expenses while retaining a high-quality academic program.

5. *We focused on communication and fund development with our alumni, donors and Foundations:*

- The College rebuilt the Advancement Office and Enrollment Office updating and streamlining platforms, policy, and operations;
- Closed a fundraising year, during the pandemic, with \$2.5 MM in outright gifts, \$3.6 MM in new pledges, and \$1.2 MM in new bequests under the leadership of Lori Weaver, Vice President for Advancement and Alumni Relations;
- Received \$200,000 toward the renovation of Kirkpatrick Lab under the leadership of Dr. Anna Edlund and Lori Weaver;
- Increased our enrollment during the pandemic re-engaging EAB and Financial Aid Solutions, committed to and executed a strategy of annual improvements in admissions recruitment and fall-to-fall retention resulting in a 10% improvement in FY21.
- We will expect a slight reversion this academic year with an incoming cohort of between 200-210. With a total enrollment between 550-575. We know that we must put this past 600 as soon as feasible and will turn our attention now to mid-term transfers – making transferring to Bethany as seamless as possible.

6. *Focused on developing new partners and identifying potential new directions to strengthen programs and opportunities:*

- Explored the expansion of our partnership with Olgelbay Institute in order to deliver a collaborative approach to our theater program with Towngate Theater (under agreement), our Fine Arts program with the Stifel Fine Arts Center (exploration), and our Environment Science program with the Schrader Center (exploration);
- Developed with Oglebay Resort & Park options to expand our Equine Program and summer camp operations;
- Established an Intellectual Property Policy in the event there is revenue produced from our increasing faculty research, particularly in biological sciences, environmental sciences, etc.;
- Re-established the Bethany Marching Band in order to re-seed our music program and develop an atmosphere of competitive excellence in athletic and music competition.

7. *Continued to focus on strategy to attract students to Bethany College and to further streamline our operations:*

- We engaged, under the leadership of our new Board Chair, Ken Bado, Mr. Jamie Caridi Founder and CEO, Terra Firma (at the recommendation of our Higher Learning Commission Site Visit Team) in order to receive a full assessment on the College’s financial realities, revenue and reduction opportunities, optimization of our academic and athletic program, and to consider possible market “demand gaps,” which Bethany College can fill for growth in enrollment.
- This process was reported out at the **August 6-7, 2021** Board of Trustees Fall Meeting. A **full strategic realignment and planning process** will follow this academic year with participation across the life of the campus.
- Let me pause here and say – we must have a final strategic and nimble plan in place by December 31<sup>st</sup>. The needs facing the College, particularly in attracting an additional 100 students (minimum annually), is URGENT and under Board of Trustee mandate.
- A working group consisting of leadership from the following is being appointed and will begin work immediately:
  - Board of Trustees (as appointed)
  - President & Cabinet (as appointed)
  - Sam Goodge, President of Staff Council (SC)
  - Adam Fletcher, Chair, Faculty Welfare Committee (FWC)
  - Travis Straub, Faculty Budget Committee (FBC), Faculty Retention, Tenure and Promotion Committee (FRTP)
  - Anju Ramjee, Bethany School of Graduate Studies (Master’s initiative) (BSGS), FWC & Faculty Curriculum Committee (FCC)
  - Melanee Sinclair, Representative of FBC & FRTP
  - Lisa Reilly, Associate Provost, Academic Liaison Officer (ALO) and FCC
  - Anna Edlund, FCC

▪ *Elect At-Large Faculty*

This group will begin, in earnest, the work to complete a robust and immediately implementable Institutional Strategic Plan. The long-term life of the College will depend on our ability to move quickly and without hesitation.

Similarly, an already appointed group will continue to review, upgrade and revise as needed our Governance Policy to ensure we are compliant and have the ability to be responsive to our pressing market realities, particularly, the declining birth rates of 18-22 year old students over the next three years, the cost of delivery of our current model, and innovation to extend the College to new markets quickly (as of Fall 2022).

With these larger institutional accomplishments and moves before us, I will also share with you here brief updates from each department of the College:

**By Department:**



**1. The Academic Program**

There have been many academic initiatives moving forward this summer. Chelsey Fletcher, Ian Lanzillotti, Lisa Reilly, Melanee Sinclair, and Heather Taylor attended the AAC&U Institute on General Education Assessment to kickstart our work on advancing the recommendations of the 2019 Strategic Vision Task Force and devise a framework for evaluating and revising our core curriculum. Scott Brothers and Jessie Janeshek attended a workshop on “Deliberation and Debate” designed to help sharpen the discussion of pressing issues in first-year courses. That program was delayed from the pandemic summer of 2020.

The Board’s decision to authorize the creation of a Bethany School of Graduate Studies, of course, does not, in and of itself, bring programs into existence. That must be the work of the faculty, but we are glad to report that this work is underway:

- Charline Rowland should be commended for bringing our Master of Education back online this summer with a new focus on leadership and higher education. We look forward to welcoming our first cohort in that program.
- Anju Ramjee has accepted an appointment as the inaugural Director of the Bethany School of Graduate Studies and is actively working with Alex Mathew in Computer Science to design MS programs at the intersection of Business and Technology. She is also working with her colleagues in Business to bring forward a 4+1 MBA designed to encourage students who have earned a Bachelor Degree at Bethany to extend one more year and earn that degree. We look forward to those proposals coming to the faculty this year.

- Our Student Success Team successfully submitted a Title III Strengthening Institutions Program grant to the federal Department of Education. Many, many thanks to Joe Lane, Meighan Julbert, Lisa Reilly, Heather Ricciuti, Diane Snyder, and Julia Wilson. We will not know the outcome of the grant until sometime in September, but if it is successful, it will result in \$2 million to Bethany over five years to renovate the first floor of the library as a student success center, to hire and train key staff for that effort, and to launch a student tracking software suite, which we definitely need.

We could not be prouder of the application, and we all hope it proves to be successful. We thank alumna Billie Flaherty for the gift to fund the writing consultant who assisted us in completing our application.

We welcome three visiting professors who are joining us for this year - Hayden Cooke in Education, Tammy Richmond in Accounting, and Ted Pauls in Business. Tammy has been an adjunct with us before, and Ted has been a member of our faculty for many years, so we are glad to welcome him back.

We are also happy to welcome Brandon Wolfe as the Assistant Dean of Institutional Compliance, Research, and Strategy.

Stephanie Gordon has decided to leave Bethany to work for Brooke County Schools. We will miss her, but we are happy to announce that Ann Laski, a longtime Registrar at multiple institutions, has agreed to serve as our interim registrar while we conduct a search. She will be with us online as of this afternoon and will be in our office very soon. In the meantime, many thanks to those who will be filling in inside that office over the next couple of weeks to give us in-person coverage. Please remember to direct correspondence to [registrar@bethanywv.edu](mailto:registrar@bethanywv.edu), and we will be sure that queries and requests are answered and acted upon.



## 2. Student Life:

Student Life saw changes in the entire Health and Wellness Office, including the retirement of Carol Tyler after a lifetime of service to Bethany College and our students, as well as 10-year employee Renee Stock.

- Ashley Cupp joined the campus in the Wellness Center in August 2020 just in time for our first challenges with COVID last year. She did a great job helping organize our testing and continued policy review.
- Lisa Bain joined the Wellness team in January after the retirement of Carol. Lisa joins us from years of service in health care service.
- Terri Rawson joined us as the Counselor for the College. We are excited to have Terri here. She served our students not only during the spring but has continued to provide service to those students who need it over the summer.

We are excited to have Khali Blankenship return and the continued dedicated of service by Sam Goodge.

- Khali Blankenship edited and implemented a challenging Title IX regulation required to be in place no later than August 19, 2020 last year. Additionally she brought back Sexual Assault Awareness Week education and was critical in the implementation of a group of faculty, staff, and students working together on educational efforts, programming, and campus climate concerns.
- Sam Goodge, in addition to managing all of the student life programing transitions under Covid-19, also reinstated and directed successful summer camps this year with approximately 700 campers on campus. This week is our first Bethany Band Camp in years, thank to Brad Rager.

Last year, the College provided approximately:

- 150 vaccinations;
- Conducted approximately 2200 Covid surveillance tests;
- Delivered almost 6000 meals last year to students in isolation or quarantine.

*Note: Khali will be taking over work with the Greek Community while Sam enhances the student residential experience, retention efforts, and leadership development.*

- We must acknowledge the retirement of the most important member of our Student Life family. Mickey Ulrich will be retiring in September after 22 years of service to the College. She is a welcoming face during some of our students' most difficult days or when they just have a concern about a roommate issue. Mickey has administered the Office of Student Life with efficiency and grace. Thank you.
- Michelle Bower from the Business Office will join the Student Life office team when Mickey retires. We are excited to have her in Student Life.

Dean Stebbins writes, *“Our entire team are rock stars; they have all put in so many extra hours, days, weekends, and effort. Thank you all for all you have done when I and others have been watching, but, more importantly, when we and others don't see the great work you do for our students.”*

Goals for the upcoming year:

- To continue to create greater inclusivity across the campus through leadership development, ethical development, and growth experiences;
- Invest in Title IX training, programming, and education;
- Diversify programming on campus through SAC;



- Enhance the Greek experience;
- Partner with Athletics to support their programs and support the total student athlete.



### 3. Enrollment:

The Enrollment Office focused on a goal of 240 incoming students. We recognize the impact of Covid-19 on direct influencers in College choice. We will not hit 240 this fall but may do so by mid-year.

- Applications increased by 21%, another record year.
- Acceptances increased by 24%.
- Acceptances and scholarship competitions were processed quickly.
- Financial Aid awards were processed quickly and ahead of previous year.

#### Visits and outreach:

- Covid resulted in fewer on-campus visits for both athletic and daily visits, and all but eliminated group visit programs.
- Virtual Visits, including scholarship competitions, were steady—but no comparison to on-campus experiences.
- High School Visits were basically all cancelled (offered virtually).
- College Fairs were cancelled (offered virtually).
- DOC church camps and events were cancelled, including weekly church services and youth group meetings.
- We created and supplemented with virtual “events”.

With the lack of visits on campus and outreach, the Enrollment staff doubled down on phoning, texting, calling, emailing various messages to students, parents, high school counselors, and ministers, including social media connections and personal handwritten notes to students and families.

We outsourced financial aid, which required a transitional period, but ultimately allowed for expedited packaging. Laura Doty’s attention was critical in making this transition as seamless as possible.

We welcomed Joel Jarrett to the team this year.

Goals for this year:

- Complete the implementation process for Radius and hire a report writer (together with I.T.).
- Increase our response time to engage TAG Advisors.

- Increase our response time of billing statements (FY21 due to late budget process).
- Continue to ensure every student received at least one follow-up call and text offering to discuss financial aid award.
- Re-invent the Campus Tour.
- Work with Building & Grounds to stage fully renovated living spaces.
- Refresh recruitment messaging materials with the new strategic plan.
- Refresh our messaging and understand perceptions in the marketplace.

NOTE: Our enrollment is down 33 students in the lowest academic quintile. Our current average entering class GPA is 3.37 compared to 3.1 last year and 2.8 the prior year.

Where we saw growth:

- Local market in northeast OH, full state of WV, and western PA markets
- Increase by 9 in highest academic rank quintile
- We have 27 incoming international students expected with 9-10 more showing interest for Spring.



#### 4. Office of Business and Finance

The Office of Business and Finance in April completed its third yearly audit in 20 months. All audits contained “clean” opinions.

We also applied for and received our second Payroll Protection Program loan from the government to help fund payroll through the on-going pandemic. This loan is for institutions that lost significant revenues during the pandemic, which the College did in the form of room and board refunds to students, as well as gas revenues when the economy shut down last year.

The Information Technology department is in the process of upgrading our network equipment, allowing us to increase our bandwidth for internet services to three times the current level.

We anticipate closing the USDA in the next few months, which will give the College over \$1 MM in savings as well as offer up to \$4 MM in infrastructure and program development capacity.

We welcomed:

- Ron Gable in the IT department is taking over for Keith Bartlett as Assistant Director of Application Support and Instructional Technologist.

- Hannah Boyce in the Mailroom is taking over for Dottie Hanson as Mailroom Supervisor.

Shout outs:

Chis Sengewalt, Controller, recently passed the CPA exam and is now a Certified Public Accountant.

Entire Business department for coming into the office to keep IT up and running, paychecks going out to employees, employee benefits current, and continuing to keep the business going over the past 18 months even while the campus was closed.



4. Advancement:

The Advancement Office spent most of last year rebuilding its team. In spite of the year of rebuilding, they were able to accomplish numerous new initiatives:

- Virtual homecoming with 80+ attendees with more than 25 events;
- Hosted 23 additional alumni events;
- Hosted the Scott Lectures with a record high of 70 attendees;
- Rolled out the new alumni and career services networking platform – Alumni Fire.

The team ended the fiscal year with raising more than \$7.3M in gifts, pledges, and estate commitments. New fundraising initiatives included:

- Day of Giving for Athletics
  - Founder’s Day giving for academic programming
  - Parent fundraising efforts
  - The introduction of a loyal giving society
  - The development of donor marketing tools such as the Bethany Connect piece, Athletic Expansion brochure, and the Bethany Fund brochure.
1. Ginni Walden served as one of our superstars by managing our revised donor endowment reports that included a photo and Q&A about the student recipient. Thanks to her efforts, donors felt a sense of increased engagement with our students and the College.
  2. We are excited to share that Abby McDonald is serving as our full-time Director of Communications for Advancement.

3. I would be remiss if I didn't congratulate Shirley Kemp for her dedicated 56 years of service to the College and town.

The Advancement Office will focus on continuing to raise funds for the multi-purpose turf; thanks to the Psi Diamond Foundation, Scott Brooks and Panhandle Cleaning and Restoration for providing the \$250,000 match.

Fundraising will also continue for the athletic expansion project and the renovation of Kirkpatrick Science Suite.



### 5. Athletics:

We have much to celebrate in our Athletic Department, even under the Covid-19 academic year:

- Our softball team made the PAC championship game, narrowly missing an NCAA Tournament bid, under the guidance of Coach Cassie Moore.
- Under Coach Brian Sansom, Makenzee Mason was named the Women's Basketball PAC "Newcomer of the Year".
- In Women's Track and Field under Coach Andy Upton, Riley Meyers had an 18<sup>th</sup> place finish in the COUNTRY in the 400-meter hurdles, set two school records, earned two PAC individual titles, and was the first Bethany College female to qualify for NCAA Championships. Riley was also named "Female" PAC Scholar Athlete of the Year.

A herculean effort was made by our department in several areas including:

- Overseeing and managing the PAC Track and Field Championships in Morgantown, WV, for 2 days.
- Overseeing and managing the NCAA Division III Men's Golf Championship at Oglebay for 7 days.
- Managing the testing and Covid-protocol guidelines to ensure our scholar-athletes were able to compete 2<sup>nd</sup> semester.
- Performing 3,448 tests in our spring semester. Our negativity rate was 99.54%.
- Hosting nearly 60 home events in the spring semester.

All of this was led by our Trainer Kacey Morrison, Sports Information Director Erikka Sansom, and Assistant AD Meighan Julbert! Thank you.

This academic year we named Mike Worrell interim and then permanent Athletic Director, and named Meighan Julbert Assistant Athletic Director for Student Athlete Success. We broke ground on the new Athletic Field on August 3, and we will be adding additional Assistant Coaching staff to work with our lower recruiting teams and fill in vacancies on our larger teams going forward. This will be funded from savings in the A.D. position.

### Concluding Remarks

As mentioned earlier, our outcome reports from our Higher Learning Commission, the Strategic Vision Task Force, and the Terra Firma report set the stage for immediate (6-12 months) actions we must take, as well as longer term planning, which will require of us a sense of urgency.

We must be a forward-facing institution as the combined headwinds of enrollment, retention, and related financial challenges (including our infrastructure) are strong. We must be able to bring new and alternative revenue programs through our institutional processes quickly in order to impact our ability to generate life-critical revenue to the College. Similarly, we must be in a position to eliminate programs, based on a strategic plan, to enable growth in areas with a demonstrable return in student enrollment.

This is not the time to fall back to comfortable positions or “the way we have always done it...”; rather, this is our time to disrupt our practices and processes and advance **BOLDLY** into the future in order to sustain and grow Bethany College.

Every year, I set a # to guide us forward in a simple word:

#BethanyPride – Reminding the College to be Proud to be Bethany Bison

#BethanyHome – Reminding our students to respect the College as their home

#OneBethany – Pulling the campus together as one team (2 Years of Focus)

#BethanyStrong – Reminding the College we can persist through the Pandemic

This year, let us be **BethanyBold** – Leading the College to necessary and bold change!

Sincerely,

Dr. Rodenberg  
President