



Securing a Legacy of Innovation, Impact and Excellence

*This is the fifth and final in a series of reflections for alumni and friends of Coe College.
I welcome your comments and observations.*

Dear Friends,

Campus has quieted since the departure of our students for summer break. Yet although there is far less foot traffic crisscrossing the quads and passing between buildings, Coe College continues to buzz with energy as we prepare for the upcoming academic year — a momentous academic year, one that will mark the college's demisemiceptcentennial. When I look out my window I am greeted by newly hung banners proclaiming the anniversary: 175 years of Coe, distributed throughout campus in Crimson and Gold. "The feeling of family has consistently been one of Coe's greatest assets," proclaims the centennial edition of the *Courier*, published in 1951. I cannot wait for our students to be reunited with their second home come fall, so that we may kick off this exciting milestone together.

Throughout this series of reflections, I have welcomed you into the vital conversations around the changes faced by higher education in the 21st century. Innovation is an integral value recognized in our strategic plan; we could not make exceptional opportunities possible for our students without the willingness to adapt. This fact was recognized long before we developed the strategic framework, *Progress with Purpose*, which will guide Coe's future. "Many liberal arts colleges will not survive to the end of the century," wrote Joseph E. McCabe, our 11th president, in his 1977 memoir. "When the twenty-first century opens, Coe will be here, with distinction. The college has just too many lovers and critics to have any future but a good one. There will always be support for excellence, and that is the course which has been charted." His words ring true almost 50 years later (and I will take this moment to thank *you* for supporting the excellence that President McCabe, and Coe now, promises).

The successes we continue to achieve 175 years into the existence of Coe College could not be possible, of course, without a lot of hard work behind the scenes and generous gifts of our supporters, whether through time, talent or treasure. The realities of pressure in higher education are daunting — notably, the fragile economic reality for tuition-dependent schools I discussed in my first letter. The cost of campus operations rises, and the reliability of federal and state aid fluctuates, as our commitment to excellence finds new paths to traverse. In seeking practical and creative solutions to promote financial sustainability, besides the approach noted in the first letter, we've brought new Kohawks into the mix. Associate Professor of Anthropology Dr. Julie Fairbanks will soon add a new role to her plate as grant writer, focusing on the advancement of our college in a specific, strategic way. Last year we welcomed Jon Michael Lafayette as Assistant Director of Athletic Development, a role that has bridged the alumni engagement and advancement efforts of our athletics and Annual Fund teams. Perhaps the most impressive and wide-reaching component of this collaboration is Athletic Day of Giving, an opportunity that sprung to life last year and garnered over 800 gifts and \$300,000 for student-athletes earlier this month. Furthermore, our staff is working diligently to build a better payroll system and to more deliberately consider cost-control financial planning, processes spearheaded by Vice President for Finance & Administration Jim Choate. We look forward to exploring the new opportunities these positions will continue to seek out and generate for the benefit of the entire Coe community.

Through it all, the heart of our mission at Coe is to provide each student with a personalized education that prepares and empowers students to design their futures, launch their careers and be the architects of their own progress with purpose. "The Coe faculty have

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consistently attempted to train their students to think critically, to act as intelligent and responsible citizens . . . To what extent they have succeeded only the individual students can testify, but the faculty could have had no higher goals,” asserts the Courier’s centennial edition. We trust that our students *can* testify to the achievement of these aims; individual stories featured in the Summer 2026 edition of the Courier prove that our graduating class of 2026, for example, considers itself prepared for what comes next in their lives.

As student access and success are the highest priorities of a liberal arts college such as Coe, capital projects in the works intend to enhance student experiences from the scholarships they receive to the classrooms they study in. Our endowment, Coe’s financial foundation, is an attractive area for support. Gifts to the endowment fund scholarships (awarded depending upon financial need, academic achievement or the combination of both, providing students with funds to offset the cost of tuition), increase opportunities for student/faculty research and off-campus study, enable the college to bring the best faculty to campus (consider endowed fellowships, professorships and chairs), provide for facility improvement, establish distinctive programs and support key strategic initiatives. Gifts to the Annual Fund go to work immediately for the areas of greatest need; in April we celebrated a successful Day of Giving that raised over \$300,000 for scholarship and financial aid packages, faculty support and academic programs, student support services, daily operations and the overall Coe experience. We are also looking to make improvements on the spaces we know and love, spaces that hold so many of our memories from our time on campus: Murray and Greene Halls, Dows Fine Arts Building, the P.U.B. patio, the Armstrong-Douglas main lobby and the Alumni House. I recognize, just as well as our students do, the importance of the residential experience, including wellness design in community spaces and dedicated communal anchors. Each step of the strategic framework is approached with students at the forefront of mind.

Former President McCabe wrote, “In these later years . . . I have time to visit with people about our college. What encourages me every day is to see the record of gifts from the morning mail. People do care deeply about this good place. I hope those who have spent time on the campus will always have warm and strong sentiments toward Coe.” As I reflect on my own time as president of this beloved institution and look forward to the progress we will surely make in the years to come, I wholeheartedly agree. And now is a critical time to promote Coe’s positive direction; to support the success of the strategic plan, Heather and I are upping our giving to the college over the next two years.

Collective investment today defines Coe’s future for the next 175 years. The mentality we must have amid the celebration is that this year is year one of the next 175, and we must honor Joseph McCabe’s vision by adopting a startup, entrepreneurial mentality. Join us: amplify the impact of the strategic framework by showing your support. Coe’s success is measured solely by the success of its graduates, and your gift can touch the paths of students in so many ways, providing them with the opportunities and boosts they need to define their own individual success. As an incredibly valued member of the Coe College community, help us secure a legacy of innovation, impact and excellence. Do your part in proving that *people do care deeply about this good place*.

I hope you will join me in discussing this letter in a final, follow-up Zoom session. I am eager to provide a detailed update on the work we have done one year into the strategic plan and to outline priorities for year two; I look forward to diving into your thoughts and questions as we continue the conversation.

Alma mater, hail hail hail!



David Hayes '93
President

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