

2022 Report to ELCA Synod Assemblies

As I fulfill my last weeks as Augustana's president, I reflect on how challenging times bring to light new thinking towards the greater good. A pandemic is a strong reminder of how our work can serve the world's deep needs. Often, it's the kind of work fueled by gifts and talents beyond the academic, with results that expand any narrow definition of success.

At Augustana, Pastor Melinda Pupillo now meets regularly with our co-curricular leaders in student affairs. This collaboration is building a deeper understanding of what we offer students outside the classroom, and how those opportunities can lead to more fulfilling lives for graduates and those they serve.

I am excited about our new program for a community of sophomores called ALIVE (Augustana Leaders in Vocational Exploration), funded by Augustana's Presidential Center for Faith and Learning. ALIVE asks students, in the midst of their everyday lives, to consider the big questions about who they are called to be for the sake of the world. This year, 11 sophomores living in Swanson Hall met weekly for vocational conversation and learning, and designed and led programming for their peers.

Founders Hall, meanwhile, has been re-named The Steve and Jane Bahls Campus Leadership Center. Jane and I are deeply honored by this. Built 80 years ago, the building houses Ascension Chapel and various administrative offices, including the Office of the President. For 19 years this first-floor corner office has witnessed early-morning conversations, midday office hours with students, and planning through the dark hours. Now it will be renovated for incoming president Andrea Talentino, who begins on July 1.

Andrea Talentino becomes Augustana's ninth president in 162 years. She was unanimously recommended by the Augustana College Board of Trustees after review of a pool of candidates that far surpassed expectations. With 22 years of experience in higher education, Andrea arrives with the values, dedication and energy that will continue to build what she calls "transformative opportunity" for Augustana students, and for the world that needs our graduates.

As I have said ever since Andrea accepted the calling in January, I know that Augustana's best days are ahead. She is the ideal person to take Augustana College into the future.

Finally, I want to say what a privilege and joy it has been to serve at Augustana, one of 26 great institutions affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. May we all continue to serve with compassion and clear thinking for the times ahead.

Yours sincerely,



Steven C. Bahls