

Dear Prospective Westmont Parent,

As a parent of three Westmont College students, one graduated and two currently attending, I appreciate and value everything that makes Westmont unique. Westmont is all about a great liberal arts education with a solid Christian foundation. Its residential campus offers a complete undergraduate program with a range of global opportunities. Westmont excels at merging rigorous academics and a love for God. And students experience excellence in learning, and practical experience in a Christ-centered community as they prepare to make a difference in the world in ways that matter and sustain society.

These distinctive characteristics of Westmont were recently tested by fire – literally. As you might know, a wildfire swept through the Westmont campus on the evening of November 13. Along with destroying several buildings and damaging several others on campus, 15 faculty homes were destroyed along with nearly 200 more homes in the surrounding community. Fortunately, no one from Westmont was injured. The Westmont community came together at its best – from the faculty and staff to the students and families. Judy and I personally took part in the discussions Dr. Beebe had with his staff as they responded to this crisis. We were able to witness first hand the impact of students reaching out to faculty and neighbors who had lost priceless possessions. This was Christian community in action, and one that works because of what makes Westmont unique. We were proud to stand with others at Westmont as we all took part in the restoration effort.

When our children leave for college, it's not only a big transition for them, but it's also one for us. Westmont helps parents embrace and navigate effectively through this change by encouraging each student to take ownership of their education and their faith. Colossians 3:12 says, *"Put on as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience."* We can offer compassion while being patient as our son or daughter takes on this ownership. And, patience only works when we take an eternal perspective. In today's world of multi-tasking and high-performance demands, it's often difficult to view this transition as part of God's eternal plan. Rather than react and make decisions based on any and every new piece of information, we can take an eternal view. Our own attitude and perspective will greatly affect our on-going relationship with our son or daughter over their college years, and is foundational to our own acceptance of and navigating through this change. This certainly played out as my wife and I sat nearby in Santa Barbara as one of our sons was evacuated to Murchison Gym during the fire. We could do little but trust those to whom we had entrusted his care and patiently wait until students were allowed to leave the safety of the shelter-in-place.

Westmont makes it simple for parents to continue to help their student become the leader who adds value and is able to make the decisions and choices that will matter and sustain society. As we pray for our students, their roommates, classmates and the entire community, we can also tap into Westmont's information stream – everything from a comprehensive web site, to a student newspaper, online chapel messages and more. By tapping into this stream, we can engage in conversations that will ultimately affect our student's lives and are especially relevant to them. If you had been a parent during the recent fire, the Westmont web site was frequently updated throughout each day with the latest information you would have wanted to know.

Parents are also made to feel part of the redemptive community being pursued at Westmont, yet without hovering over them. Over the past five years, we have appreciated all of the outstanding people at



Westmont - from Dr. Gayle Beebe, Westmont's president, his faculty and staff, to each and every one of the students and their families. When you have a student at Westmont, you become part of this community and have every opportunity to get to know new people from many different walks of life. And this doesn't have to stop when your student graduates. We have Westmont families who have three generations of graduates! Wow. What a legacy. My wife Judy and I have formed life-long friends from our connections at Westmont, and all in a relatively short period of time as parents. This community bond was clearly evident as we worked hand-in-hand with faculty, students, staff and parents during the communication response to the fire and subsequent follow up meetings and restoration efforts.

While you and your student consider Westmont College, think about how Westmont engages you as parents. You are already part of this transformational process, so why not embrace and navigate this life transition in a place where you can continue to build into the life of your student while being a part of this wonderful extended community.

You will find few opportunities in higher education that truly compare to Westmont. I hope to see you at Westmont Orientation in the Fall of '09.

Sincerely,

Joe Rehfeld
Co-Chair, Westmont Parents Council

P.S. Westmont completed the Fall academic session on schedule. Our faculty has found housing until their homes can be rebuilt. And re-construction of damaged buildings is underway. Please join us in being thankful for the Lord's provision and protection during this time.

