

Q & A Session with Dr. Gayle Beebe, President, Westmont College

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Joyce Luy: I'm Joyce Luy. I'm moderator and dean of admission. Due to the large contributions of questions, we have consolidated some to be more concise and to make sure that we get your questions answered. I will direct the questions to the pertinent members of the panel, and they will now introduce themselves briefly, Dr. Beebe.

Dr. Beebe: Gayle Beebe, president.

Evan Engle: Evan Engle, I'm an RA in Clark dorms.

Andrea Owen: Andrea Owen, I'm another student.

Joyce Luy: I'm Joyce Luy. I'm moderator and dean of admission.

Jane Higa: Jane Higa, vice-president for student life and dean of students.

Ben Patterson: Ben Patterson, campus pastor.

Diane Horvath: Diane Horvath, director of financial aid.

Warren Rogers: And I'm Warren Rogers. I'm currently the interim academic dean and a professor of physics.

Joyce Luy: Jodie Smith, associate dean of admission, is here to follow your questions, and we will be submitting more questions as they arrive. We're going to start with Dr. Beebe. **Dr. Beebe, the term 'liberal arts' is confusing to some and when you add 'Christian liberal arts' it's even more so. Would you please provide a clear definition for us?**

Dr. Beebe: That's a great question. I think if you start with the whole tradition of the liberal arts, they go back 2,500 years to Plato, Aristotle and the Greeks, and the idea was that knowledge could be ordered and that you were to follow the order and pattern of knowledge, so that your mind could be trained properly. The idea was that you start with grammar and logic; you needed to learn how language is used and then how proper speech is ordered. When you combine grammar and logic, you produce rhetoric, and so it went grammar, logic, rhetoric, and that showed mastery of language. And then the higher-order thinking was arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music. You were to learn arithmetic and geometry so you could understand how to study the stars and how to understand the underlying structure of music and not just perform great music.

When the entire Mediterranean world began to encounter the truth of Christ, many of the early converts to Christianity had been trained in the ancient Greek system, and they began to think about how do we understand our relationship to Christ and Christ's relationship to all knowledge. This idea of all truth being God's truth and all knowledge originating in the creator gave rise to the idea of Christian liberal arts. It wasn't enough just to study the various areas of human learning, you also had to have your mind trained so that you could understand and know the great things of God. The idea of the Christian liberal arts is that you have to master every area of human learning, but you also have to have a mind well trained to make discerning judgments about God. The anchor point in this is that our commitment to Christ gives us the opportunity to, in essence, have faith seeking understanding. It's out of that commitment that we're able to study all aspects of knowledge from a point of view that brings ultimate understanding.

Joyce Luy: Great, thanks. Another has asked, **"How is Westmont different from other liberal arts colleges?"**



Dr. Beebe: Well, I can't say how it's different from every liberal arts college, but what I do think is unique at Westmont, and I have worked at three other schools – one as a part-time professor and two as full-time professors and administrators – what I love about Westmont is we provide an atmosphere that is totally committed to the liberal arts. That commitment includes the opportunity to study with great professors in warm, intimate settings and really pursue interaction and integration of all these great ideas.

What I find so unique is that so few places actually provide both the great professors and the atmosphere that reinforces the liberal arts. Some schools have great professors, but they are so large that you never have access to them. Other schools provide some great professors and then a lot of adjunct professors, and there's no sense of continuity or quality across the curriculum. What I think we're able to provide is really this subtle understanding that we want you studying with the best minds in each of their fields so that your own mind can be trained in a way that's very compelling.

Joyce Luy: We describe ourselves, Dr. Beebe, as an undergraduate college. Can you explain the importance of that experience and why it's such an important element for us?

Dr. Beebe: Between the ages of 18-23 you make many of the most important decisions that shape your life, and you really don't realize it. You're making decisions about career trajectory, you're making life-value decisions, and you're making life-partner decisions. And even if those get postponed, many of the shaping values that influence those areas of decision are made during this very critical period. One of the most significant books to me - and if you've heard me talk before on these subjects you know I love this book - is by Richard Light, "Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds." It was published by Harvard University Press in the late 1990s, maybe as late as 2000, I can't recall. But the point of the book is to look at how the undergraduate experience can make its ultimate contribution in shaping both our mind and our character in a way that really influences the outcome of our life.

Another key book was written about 15 years ago, "The New Case for the Liberal Arts." Essentially these authors were all social scientists, and they were studying what is the unique experience at the undergraduate level that contributes to the decisions students make about what career they'll pursue, what subjects they'll study, what graduate schools they'll pursue and what kind of life results from that. Through this literature, you recognize that the undergraduate experience is a critical period when people are making the decisions that will shape their life destiny, and it's very critical to make wise choices.

Joyce Luy: This is a good follow-up question to that. "We are concerned that our son might not be prepared for or valued in a career search especially if the economy remains as it is today if he graduates from a Christian liberal arts college. Can you respond?"

Dr Beebe: This is a great question. I think there is so much pressure within our culture about whether or not we are going to be able to get a great job, and I share that concern. I want your son or daughter to be able to get a great job, but one of the best things they can do is to prepare their mind for whatever job they'll pursue. When my dad graduated from college in 1951, he essentially settled into a career that he did up until retirement. When I graduated from college in 1981, I was told that over the next 43 years, I was going to change jobs between 8-9 times. Today our graduates are told that when they graduate, they will change jobs between 14-18 times over the life of their career. When you think about what you are going to face in terms of the complexity of life in the 21st century and the complexity of the economy, you have to have the capacity, both intellectually and emotionally, to be able to change jobs, to learn how to learn so that you can adjust to new environments and to be able to really enter into the complexity of cultures and the variety of fields in order to be successful.

In my previous institution, I had the privilege of visiting with a vice president of human resources at the Lear Corporation. It used to be a \$15 billion company, I don't know how much business it's doing now, but it's a supplier to the big three auto industries. I was visiting with this vice president and asked him what kind of graduates need to come out of liberal arts colleges in order to be attractive to you. He said, "Everyone thinks it's rocket science; it really isn't rocket science. We need graduates to come in who are teachable, who will learn the systems that are already a part of this company. We need them to be computer literate; we don't need them to be wiz kids, but we need them to have just basic computer literacy." And he said, "I'm almost embarrassed to say this, but the third thing is that we need them to be moral, because the single area of greatest loss to a company is employee theft." The Lear Corporation, which is a technically sophisticated company, isn't looking for everyone to come out of an engineering school, they're looking for a complex and a complementary training and background because they don't want everybody to look the same, but they need to have people with similar values. Well a liberal arts college graduate can go right into a company that will train them, they can go on to graduate school in a specialized area, or, like many of our students, go into one of the professional degree programs like medicine,



dentistry, optometry and law. Many of our graduates go on to be extremely well prepared for the fields they end up entering.

Joyce Luy: Well, here's a question I think is on a lot of folks' minds, **"We've had a lot going on this year, we're interested in learning more about the aftermath of the Tea Fire. How's Westmont weathering the current economic crisis and additional setbacks from the fire? How's the campus doing regarding stability, rebuilding, and safety and prevention of future fires? And lastly, same question how's faculty morale?"**

Dr. Beebe: That's a very good question, or, I should say, a variety of good questions. We live on campus; the president's home is at the top of campus, and virtually everything around the house burned, but the house is still intact. Shortly after the fire somebody asked us, "Are you worried about moving back in?" And I said, "There's not going to be a fire here for 10 years, there's no fuel!" I'm sure the fuel will come back sooner, and we certainly hope there won't be a fire any time soon, if ever again, but there's several decisions that we're making to try to minimize the damage from another fire.

One is the way we're replanting. We're being very deliberate in the types of plants we're bringing back, where we're putting them and doing what we have to do in order to screen properly. We are keeping plants away from buildings. One of the easiest ways for buildings to catch fire is not from the roof, but from plants on fire that catch the eaves on fire, and then the roof collapses. There's just a variety of things that we're doing in that way. Then we bought a 350-gallon brush fire truck to fight brush fires and a 2,400-gallon tanker truck that will help us to be first responders. We don't expect to ever send people into buildings, but we want our buildings and grounds crew to be trained to fight brush fires, fires external to buildings, because we could have saved some of the buildings and certainly could have prevented a lot of the damage if we would have had that capacity.

And how are the faculty doing? On the whole, the faculty are fantastic. I mean it's a great testimony to their resiliency that as they've gotten settled and their basic physical needs have been met, they've been able to return with full of vigor to their responsibilities as our academic leaders and provide the emotional and intellectual energy our students need. I've been extremely impressed with how the faculty are doing and how they've weathered this. In fact, right before we started the call, I received a thank-you note from one of the 14 faculty who lost homes. She was just thankful for everything that's been done to encourage her during this time, and she is flourishing even though she has suffered mightily.

Joyce Luy: **Along with that, could you describe the new construction plans and what's unfolding there and conclusion dates?**

Dr. Beebe: For the three structures in Clark, preliminary work will start just before school is out and then the noisy construction will start as soon as the students are gone. The math building was due for demolition, the physics building was not, but both of those departments are going into the new Winter Hall for Science and Mathematics, and so we won't be rebuilding either of those facilities. The construction on the new road is going well; the observatory is coming along nicely; Winter Hall is ahead of schedule; Adams Center is behind schedule, but still within striking distance.

Interestingly enough, we actually lost more days to rain than we did to the fire. But I really do think we're in good shape, both in terms of the new construction and the rebuilding of the 14 faculty homes that were burned. The general contractors overseeing that have told us that they'll be back into their homes either by mid-January or early February of this coming year. So, we're less than a year away from the entire campus and faculty being settled, which is a good sign.

Joyce Luy: **And regarding the Clark Halls, the dorm that burned, will that be available this fall?**

Dr. Beebe: Yes, it will be available this fall, and it will be a tight rebuilding timeframe, but we have received word that they're confident they can have those up and ready by the start of the fall semester this year.

Joyce Luy: Great. We also have Diane Horvath here, director of financial aid, and we're going to address some questions to her in just a moment. But while we have Dr. Beebe here, we're going to have him also respond to a few of these areas. Many of the questions opened in this manner: **"We would love nothing more than for our son/daughter to attend Westmont. We're praying for God's abundant provision and exploring every possible avenue. Thank you for taking the time to address all of our concerns on these matters. And then many of the questions went like this: How can spending \$40,000 plus a year on my child's undergraduate experience be justified philosophically?"**

Dr. Beebe: Well, \$40,000 a year is a lot of money. I always refer to us as being at the high end of the affordability index. But what we always say is that you've got to sit down with the financial aid office and understand what your



real cost will be. Even at that price, as expensive as it is, I think the education we provide, which is truly remarkable, is the reason the cost is so high. What other educational environment do you know about where you can literally be in classes of 10-12 people, studying with world-class minds and having your own mind shaped that way? There are so few places where you can go and that will actually occur. When I was in college, that was one of the great luxuries that I was able to experience because of grants, scholarships and loans.

But I think about some of my friends who ended up going to large universities and just floundering because they actually needed a more intimate setting and had not made that choice. I think college always requires sacrifice, and the justification of the cost is that it's what it costs for us to provide this high-quality education that really does look at how can we develop you as a complete person, not just as an intellect, not just for a vocation or a career, but truly look at how will the curricular program and the co-curricular program work in such a way that you can develop as a whole person and really have a holistic understanding of life.

Joyce Luy: Another one in that vein, **“We appreciate that costs will be maintained at the status quo” – They’re referring to the freezing of the tuition this year – “From this year to next year. Do you have any thoughts about continuing to maintain that status quo for a few more years? If that is not possible, do you have any suggestions for financially strapped parents?”**

Dr. Beebe: We did freeze tuition this year. I don't see us freezing it again, but we'll have to take that on a year-by-year basis. We don't know all the economic indicators; we're counting on the economy coming back. And even though it's started to, it hasn't made enough headway for any of us to feel completely confident in that.

But over the next few years, I would anticipate that our costs will go up somewhere in the range of four to five percent. We're not going to take the price up just to take it up. I'm sure inflation will return, hyper-inflation maybe will return, we're just going to have to study that and make adjustments each year. But our budgetary planning will be based on a model that's somewhere in the four-to-five percent range.

Joyce Luy: **As we increase those costs, do you possibly see an addition to the financial aid budget?**

Dr. Beebe: Yes, I do. We really want to work on raising the endowment so that the single biggest contribution we could make to affordability is not by capping tuition but by raising additional financial aid dollars that could come in for student scholarships. We're committed to raising the endowment to help students meet that cost.

Joyce Luy: I'm going to now address a couple questions to Diane Horvath, director of financial aid, kind of in the same vein, because so many of your questions have been referring to this area. So, Diane, here's one of the questions for you: **“We have received our financial aid award, and we still have a balance that we need to come up with that concerns us. What advice do you have for covering that with various loans, scholarships, etc?”**

Diane Horvath: Well I think Dr. Beebe made a very good point in suggesting that parents look at the base costs of the school and, as those of you who have visited our Web site know, we actually have two budgets listed there. One includes indirect costs as well as direct costs. Usually as I'm counseling with families, I recommend that you take a look at just our direct costs. Those for next year will be about \$43,740. From that you could subtract the financial aid and then move from there as far as filling in with loans and perhaps outside scholarships that students have pursued through their high school, their community, their churches, etc. We encourage all our students to do that. The types of loans that are available to fill that extra gap would be parent loans, known as the PLUS loan, and then there are also private loans available to families.

Joyce Luy: **Diane, could you describe a little bit about the process for the PLUS loans and the interest rates?**

Diane Horvath: The PLUS loan is available to credit-worthy parents, and the cost of education minus the financial aid award would be the amount that parents could borrow. The interest rate on that is 8.5 percent, it's a fixed rate. Repayment of interest begins immediately. However, you can postpone or defer the payment of interest and/or principal for up to four years.

Joyce Luy: **Along with that, are there more opportunities for additional financial aid, scholarships and work during the first year and after the first year?**

Diane Horvath: The loans do increase; they're based on the student's class level, and they do increase each year. Scholarships available on campus could be based on talent or on becoming an RA. That is something we often



recommend, that a student becomes a resident assistant in a dorm; that's a great way of obtaining additional aid. Departments also give scholarships.

Joyce Luy: Great. This is one we get a lot between you and me, Diane. **“What happens to scholarship awards for those admitted students who choose not to come? Can scholarships be reallocated to a student who is coming?”**

Diane Horvath: That's a great question. As you know, Joyce, we admit more students than we can handle on campus. We do the same with our financial aid awards. We commit more dollars than we actually have within our budget, so in the end it comes together with your admitted students and our dollars. So the answer is: No, there really aren't any additional funds to be allocated, at least up front, however, we're very happy to work with families throughout the year who have unusual circumstances arise where maybe they need additional help. We can help them if there are any funds at the end of the year, we're happy to do that.

Joyce Luy: **Can interest on the subsidized Stafford loans be deferred – well it is deferred throughout school – but for graduate school as well?**

Diane Horvath: The answer to that is, yes. For the Stafford Loan and the Federal Perkins Loan, the interest on those and the principal can actually be deferred while the student is enrolled at least half time in a graduate program.

Joyce Luy: Alright, one final question for you, Diane, as another one comes in, **“Can you talk a little bit about the teach grant and Westmont's response to that?”**

Diane Horvath: I'd be happy to do that. We have not thus far decided to participate in the grant in that it is a commitment campus wide, not just in financial aid but also in the education department. I have had a commitment that we will definitely look into this and make a decision in the fall of 2009 whether or not we will be participating in that grant program.

Joyce Luy: **What would a family do if they feel they have additional information to share with you that might impact their financial aid award?**

Diane Horvath: We would love them to write us a letter of appeal. We would ask that they also send us a copy of their tax forms for the prior year, in this case for 2009-10 it would be the 2008 U.S. income tax form. You can address that appeal to the financial aid office and that will be carried forth to the financial aid appeals committee for a decision.

Joyce Luy: Great, thanks. Those are some of the loftier questions, I think we needed to address tonight, now we're going to start jumping around a little bit, and I'm going to direct this question to our interim academic dean, Dr. Rogers. **“My student is considering Harvard, Stanford, Claremont McKenna, etc. Can you describe how Westmont stands up to those schools?”**

Dr. Rogers: Sure I'd love to address that. For one thing, if you went to Harvard, Stanford or Claremont McKenna, especially the first two, you would expect much larger classes; you would expect less access to professors. Granted, these schools have world-class scholars, but primarily at Stanford and Harvard, they're not there to teach undergraduates, they're there to pursue their scholarship and graduate Ph.D.s. They have undergraduate classes to teach but the access that students have to them is much more restricted. What we can offer at Westmont is a much more intimate learning environment, where not only are you building up the mind, but you are interacting with professors as people.

Your life is being transformed in many more ways than simply in the mind. We really view the transformation of the whole student as one of the important things that needs to happen during those four years. Our academics are excellent. You come away from Harvard, Stanford and Claremont McKenna with a name, but I dare say you won't come away with a strong appreciation for the experience that you had in the classroom and especially with your peers and your professors.

Our retention rates, as I may have a chance to say a little bit later, are very, very high. Student satisfaction is high, and our students get into the very best graduate schools, which is often seen as an indicator of success. Our students have no problem getting into medical schools and getting into the best graduate schools in the country. It's one of the well-kept secrets that you don't have to go to a big-name school to be thoroughly and completely well educated, but a name may get you into a political office a little more quickly. Our students generally aspire to



careers where they're going to make a difference in this world, and we can thoroughly equip them with an education that will assist them in that. So I would say that we stand up in many ways that are often overlooked when somebody is just focused on a name.

Joyce Luy: Thanks. **“My son wants to do pre-med and is a very strong Christian. Would you explain Westmont’s philosophy regarding the integration and teaching of the sciences and faith?”**

Dr. Rogers: Absolutely, we have a very robust view of the truth here at Westmont. And we trust and believe whole-heartedly that pursuit of the truth needs to be done with the whole heart and the whole mind. Therefore, we don't leave questions unanswered, or at least we don't leave them unaddressed for the sake of the educational program. We encourage students to encounter all questions and address them honestly with the expectation that truth is in God's realm and that pursuit of those answers will not lead us astray but rather deepen us in the life of the mind, the life of the heart and our life of faith.

In science, we desire first that students learn the sciences completely, that they are thoroughly trained in science so when they go out and interact with the world as a scientist or a doctor, they will do that as well as anyone else and even better. But we also help them to struggle with, or help them to wrestle with, questions of very deep significance that you can only address at a place that allows the moral and ethical dimensions to enter the educational pursuit as deeply as we do. Our goal is to graduate students who are very conversant in science and medicine, but we don't simply give them answers, we teach them how to think and come up with their own answers. Or another way of putting it is that we teach them to live with the questions in deep and profound ways that don't necessarily demand an answer because sometimes life doesn't have answers. But if we learn to live with the questions in a wise and thoughtful way, we become deeper and more thoughtful people.

By the way, our acceptance rate to medical school a few years ago was at the very top of the nation. We were at the very top of the acceptance rate, meaning that 100 percent of our students got into medical school. It's still very near 100 percent; our students are very well placed, we have a very fine medical adviser, and a lot of good advice that students get along the way. Frankly, we also have very smart students, and they're able to get the preparation that will get them into medical school, so our acceptance rate is very high.

Joyce Luy: I'm reminded of a parent who shared the other day during an admitted students event whose son applied to 30 medical school programs and was accepted into every single one of them. So it's a very strong program. Along with that question, **“Are the academics at Westmont protected or minimized because of the Christian environment?”**

Dr. Rogers: This is another one of the best-kept secrets of Christian liberal arts education. First of all, the life of the mind is held in extremely high regard here at Westmont. As I said earlier, we really help students to wrestle with any and all questions, and it's actually in the environment of a Christian liberal arts education that students can engage with questions that are deep and meaningful at the very core of what it means to be a human being.

At other schools that have a secular approach, I believe students are being done a grave injustice by not being able to address those deep questions at that formative stage of life. They really ought to be addressing questions, like “Who am I?” “What is the meaning of life?” “Who am I accountable to?” “What is my contribution to this world?” “What is the meaning of it all?” Those are questions that are difficult to address at a secular institution. Ethical and moral questions open up a can of worms because of the restrictions on faculty against addressing those topics in any kind of religious terms.

The academics here are not protected. Rather, they're expanded because we can address the larger context of questions, i.e., beyond the intellectual into the moral, spiritual, emotional, physical and any other way that you can accentuate education – we allow and, in fact, encourage very deeply here. We do not soft peddle. I think parents often ask about the sciences, it's sort of a barometer, “Do you teach certain subjects?” We teach any and all subjects in science, and we want students to be fully conversant in the very best the sciences have to offer these days. But we also want them to be thoughtful and deeply faithful Christians who can go out and use that knowledge and expertise in a way that makes a real difference in this world, a much better difference than simply contributing to it intellectually.

Joyce Luy: **Since we're in that direction, could you describe Westmont professors' requirement for professing a personal relationship with Christ? Is that evident in the classroom?**

Dr. Rogers: Yes, first of all, all faculty sign our Statement of Faith, which is a very thorough statement of the classical evangelical Christian faith. But beyond signing it, it is also a requirement for tenure and promotion that professors demonstrate a very thoughtful approach to the integration of faith and learning in the classroom. By that we mean much more than simply addressing issues of faith, but allowing the academics to inform questions of faith



and allowing the main tenants of the faith to inform the academic pursuit in very deep and meaningful ways. It's an active dialogue on the faculty; it's not only something that we do because we need to to live long-term here at the college, but because we individually value it at such a high level.

We engage in dialogue with one another; there's a faith-learning workshop that all new faculty go through in preparation for promotion to tenure. They develop a faith-learning portfolio. I'm gratified to see that within a few years we find a beautiful, deep and subtle sophistication develop in our faculty that can only be seen by taking a class and hearing the ways in which faith does in fact inform academics and vice versa, and our students are the richer for it.

Joyce Luy: Well with that direction, I think I'm going to move over to Ben Patterson, our campus pastor, and ask him to describe why chapel is required at Westmont and what is the worship orientation of our chapel program.

Ben Patterson: First of all, we like to get rid of the word required for the same reason we don't ask, "Why are classes required at Westmont?" Westmont is a Christian college and our motto is that Christ be supreme in all things, so chapel belongs at Westmont, it's just part of what students do when they come to a school like Westmont. The fact is that just about every major university in the Western tradition started with a chapel. It was monastic, but they gathered together to worship God and to be scholars. I like to think of chapel at Westmont as leaven and the loaf. It's not the whole thing, but we do a little bit of it through the week to affect the whole experience of worship because all of life is worship. If we're going to worship God in the classroom and in the residence halls and out in the world, we need to gather together as Christians have always done to really focus on worship itself.

When I was a pastor and people would walk out of the service and say "Gosh, that was a great service; it's too bad we have to go back in the real world!" I took that as a compliment, but I also wanted to say, "Now what you saw here in this service was real." The job is, or the challenge is, to go back into the world and to live it out. So we think the Sabbath is a day to sanctify all time; we think that gathering in chapel is a way we can sanctify all we do at Westmont College, and I think we are getting there. We don't get that question asked very often, at least not by students, because if you come to Westmont, we think you are coming to worship God and to study and to be part of a Christian community. I think there are three legs on the stool: there's the academic, there's the residential and then there's chapel.

Joyce Luy: Great. Is there a denominational affiliation with Westmont?

Ben Patterson: There is not. There is a variety of denominations and independent churches represented here. I don't know how many there are, but students come from a lot of different places, and faculty as well.

Joyce Luy: This family asked, "We're Catholic; will my son feel comfortable in a Westmont chapel?"

Ben Patterson: Well I hope so. It won't be like a Catholic mass. Most of our students who are Roman Catholic really have a lot of fun and enjoy chapel. But they don't come to chapel expecting it to be like a service on Sunday morning. Our Catholic students are very involved. In fact, I can think of a number right now who are very involved in chapel, and I think they feel comfortable.

Joyce Luy: What about the music? What kind of music do you have in chapel?

Ben Patterson: Really good music! You know students come from many different places, and there's sort of a canon of music that churches have that everybody knows. So they come with a lot of different preferences, but we try to develop a body of music that we're familiar with and that would include the best of contemporary music. We work very closely with the music department. All the choirs, the ensembles and the orchestra are very involved in chapel, so we sing a lot of hymns. We try to expose students to a lot of ways Christians have worshipped God, both back in time but also around the world. We sort of drift that into the system of the college and worship experience.

Joyce Luy: Does chapel take the place of Sunday services locally?

Ben Patterson: No, but some students might think it does, to be honest. We use to joke about bedside Baptist church on Sunday morning, but we want our students to go and be involved in local churches. We don't do anything on Sunday morning. We want them to get out of bed and find their place in churches. Our students are very involved in several really good churches here in town.



Joyce Luy: We know that freshmen can't have cars, so is there transportation to the local churches?

Ben Patterson: Not every church provides transportation, but several do. And then there are upper classmen who have cars. If they want to get to church, they can get there, whether it's on a bus or with a friend.

Joyce Luy: There's also faculty who live close by, and I've known students to go to church with them as well. That's great. I spoke to Jane Higa, our vice president and dean of students. Our students are always asking lots of questions about community life, and we talk a lot about living in community. This family wants you to describe, Jane, what we mean by this: **"What is Westmont's approach to living in community?"**

Jane Higa: When you think about student life, or community life, you often think of this as some separate thing that happens at the college. They go to class, and then they go home and have fun and forget. One of the things that I have loved about Westmont is that when we have talked about community life, it's all of this community together.

Dr. Rogers earlier talked about the relationship between faculty and students. Our faculty deeply care for our students, and it shows up in all kinds of individual ways. So when I think about community life, I think of the relationship of students and faculty. I think of the relationship they have with Campus Pastor Ben Patterson and his staff, and I think of the relationship they have with the student life staff. Through it all there is the relationship they have with each other as students. And so there is a real intentionality here to grow students to be whole people and to be people who can really have the foundation to make a difference in the world. I see that coming through all these various ways of learning and watching. I think our students really are soaking in what is going on in this community.

I had an alumnus tell me that when he chose Westmont, it was because at Westmont there were people that he wanted to be like: the faculty, the students and the staff that he met. That is so true.

Joyce Luy: I heard from parents of kids from other colleges that freshmen often come home after their first year because they are home sick, they are not prepared for college and they are given too much freedom. Can you respond to these questions with Westmont and how we would handle that?

Jane Higa: There are no guarantees whether or not your son or daughter will feel homesick. Some of that is just a part of growing up and answering the question, "Who am I separate from my family?" But one of the things that I have loved is the ways in which we have walked through those kinds of developmental stages together. That is the kind of friendships that surround students. Evan is one of our R.A.s, and I think the R.A.s who are undergraduate students who live on a floor really are there for students. So much of the R.A.'s role is knowing how to care and be aware of where the student is and what they are going through. And Evan has been a great example of working with first-year students, and he is a part of this conference call, so maybe you'll get a chance to hear from him as well.

There is an incredible support system that is part of Westmont, and I continue to be amazed by our R.A.s and our resident directors, who are professional, master's-level staff who live in each residence hall, and how much they know about what's going on in the lives of our students. They stand the gap. In the end our students may have some transition issues as all college students do, but not all. Some students just thrive from the minute they arrive on campus. But that is a normal part of development, and I do love watching the way students begin to thrive under the care of this Westmont environment.

Joyce Luy: We hear a lot of questions regarding rules surrounding Christian colleges. Can you describe Westmont's philosophy toward rules and other areas like alcohol and drugs?

Jane Higa: You know one of the things that I love about Westmont is the philosophy of education that Dr. Rogers described a little earlier. It shows up in the classroom as a real freedom to explore truth in all of its dimensions. In the student life program, it shows up in the ways we treat students as maturing adults.

We do not have as many rules, in some ways. We are calling students to something higher and better and bigger than the rules. Yet at the same time we have some basic expectations that I think students agree are reasonable expectations. I have worked both at a private, non-sectarian university, the University of Southern California, and I also have worked at another Christian university. On the one hand, I felt that in one setting there was too much freedom, an anything-goes kind of a feeling. In the other setting there was maybe too much that was prescribed. Westmont has just the right balance that I believe makes our community life experience as rich as it is.

We follow state laws; students need to be 21 to drink, and there is never any drunkenness that is allowed and no alcohol on campus. But within that I would say a part of what I have loved is the ways in which students have cared for each other as they are making some choices because students can still make choices even within



that. There is behavior off campus that we would not know about, so we are always working to encourage students to care for each other and to call each other to account for the choices they make. Somewhere in this there is a maturing process, and I really do believe that when students graduate from Westmont they are prepared and ready to meet the kinds of needs that are awaiting them post-Westmont.

Joyce Luy: Thanks Jane. **What are the rules regarding boys and girls in each others' rooms?**

Jane Higa: Well, at Westmont we do have some rules related to that and we call them open hours. The specifics would be that from Sunday - Thursday the open hours are 1 p.m. in the afternoon until midnight and on Friday and Saturday it's 1 p.m. to 1 a.m. Compared to some other Christian colleges, you might see those rules as more open than at other places. There needs to be visual access in the rooms, I'm looking at Evan. As an R.A. he knows this a whole lot better than I even do.

Part of what we really do believe is that it's important for students to learn how to interact with each other, and, at the same time, care about the community that they're a part of. So we don't want to have the kind of situation where it would be uncomfortable for a roommate to come back to the room because a boyfriend and girlfriend are spending too much intimate time together. I think we have the right balance in terms of the expectations that we have about open hours in the residence halls.

Joyce Luy: Great. Well, Jane has referred to Evan, who is one of our students and a resident assistant, and I think it's time to address a couple of questions to those who are living in this environment right now. Before Andrea and Evan answer these questions, I would love for you to talk about what year you are and what majors you. So let me address the question to you first. Evan, **"How would you describe the academic program, access to your professors and the support and mentoring they provide you to?"** Each of you can chime in on both of these if you would like.

Evan: I am a senior at Westmont with a major in chemistry and a minor in art, which I added a year ago. I'm an R.A. in Clark this year.

Andrea: My name is Andrea. I'm a junior this year at Westmont. I'm a Spanish major, and I'm also pre-med. I have a chemistry minor, and I'm one of the Monroe Scholars at Westmont, which means that I have a full-tuition scholarship, which was a very huge and unexpected blessing.

Joyce Luy: Would you both respond to the question, **"How would you describe the academic program, access to your professors and the support and mentoring they provide you?"**

Andrea: I felt that Jane Higa, our dean of students, put it very well when she talked about our faculty and staff being part of the community at Westmont. As a student, I have found it's very true, and it's one of the things that I prize most about Westmont and one of the reasons that I chose Westmont: the great access we have to the faculty. In every single one of my classes, my professor has known my name and been very available as far as office hours and answering questions by students.

I have never had a class taught by a teaching assistant, every single one of my professors has been teaching the class and has been excellent. My professors have been people I respect, not only for their excellence in their field, whether it be science or language or some kind of social studies, but as Christian men and women who live exemplary lives as members of the church, as husbands or wives, and as mothers and fathers. I value the opportunity to learn from them how to live a well-balanced life, not only within the field, but also as a Christian.

Evan: I think one of the greatest things I noticed was what happened after the Tea Fire. I remember there being a lot of meetings with faculty and deciding about what to do with classes and things of the sort, and I felt very much at peace about what was going to be decided for classes, knowing the professors had our best interests in mind when they were making those decisions. I felt very encouraged afterwards having them check up and ask how we were doing and really trying to meet each student's needs at the time.

That was a really good example of how much the professors take time to care for us. Like Andrea said, each of my professors has had office hours and has been very open to helping. They are always asking us if we have questions in class instead of just continuing with the lecture. I have definitely looked up to a lot of my professors, not only as professors, but as people and as Christians as well.

Joyce Luy: **Everybody always wants to know, why did you two choose Westmont?**



Andrea: Well I mentioned getting the full-tuition scholarship, and that was part of my decision. But before I ever found out that I got that scholarship, I decided that I wanted to come to Westmont even if I had to work every summer long and during the year as well. I chose Westmont because of the professors and the way they integrate Christ into every classroom.

I wanted to have an education that would prepare me as a Christian young woman who didn't have a compartmentalized life where science was in one place and my Christianity was in another compartment, but where everything could be coherent. I also chose the college because I heard that the professors promised that it's a time when we will be asking these questions, and they promise to mentor us and walk with us through the hard questions of life and not just tell us the answers, but to teach us how to discover the answers on our own.

Evan: I was a little bit different. Both of my older siblings went to Westmont and when my oldest sister was a freshman, I was a freshman in high school. I came to visit and stayed with her friends in one of the dorms. At that time, I didn't really know what I wanted out of college, or even what college was all about, but I had this weird sense that it was where I wanted to go. So as the years went on and the college application process started, I only applied to Westmont. I know there are a lot of other schools that I could have thought about, but Westmont was the one that I knew was going to be home for me. It was kind of an easy decision.

Joyce Luy: **Andrea, you are from Dallas, Texas. How has the distance been for you?**

Andrea: The distance hasn't been nearly as hard as I had expected, not to say that I haven't had moments of homesickness. I think we all do. But I have loved Santa Barbara. It's an incredible opportunity to live in the most gorgeous city. I love the beach and the mountains; we have both. I think that one thing that helped is that even though many of my fellow students are from California, they rarely go home. Of course when we have four-day weekends people go home, but Westmont students stick around on the weekend. We all hang out together. I have never felt like I'm the only one who can't afford to go home on the weekends or anything like that. Students are around, and it's really fun.

Joyce Luy: Here is a question for you too. **“Our daughter wants to experience the full college adventure. Describe how she can be a serious student, make friends, and participate in outdoor activities at Westmont and in Santa Barbara for that full experience. She is concerned that Westmont will be too hard and she won't find time for fun.”**

Andrea: I'd say that Westmont classes are challenging but in the very best sense. We don't want classes that are too easy, we'll just get bored, but I do also feel like I've had time to develop other aspects of myself and mature in other ways, rather than only academically. I think one thing to realize is a difference between college and high school, you're not in class for nearly as many hours in college as you are in high school so there's a lot more free time during the day.

I also think that having a great many things to do has taught me really wonderful time-management skills. I'm doing an internship this semester, I'm working this semester, I have all my classes, and I still have time for fun and time to get all my homework done. There's a lot of help with study skills and time-management skills if students are struggling. We all work together, and the great thing about living in the dorms is that you can take a study break and go say hi to all your friends for 20 minutes and then go back, because everybody is right there, they are so close.

Joyce Luy: **We hear the term “suitcase campus,” a lot which means that students pack up and leave on the weekend and come back on Mondays. So you're saying that that doesn't occur here.**

Andrea: No. Not that much.

Joyce Luy: Great. I'm going to jump around a little bit. **I'm going to go back to Ben and ask him to tell us about who we have had as some of our chapel speakers.**

Ben Patterson: Just last week we had Richard Foster, who would be known to a lot of folks. He's had a tremendous impact on the church in the last 35 years with his book, “The Celebration of Discipline.” Richard was one of the highlights for me this year. We had Peter Craig with us from Boston College, a philosopher and author of about 40 books. He is one of the most accessible writers you'll ever read who addresses matters of faith and learning and the big ideas.



We've also had some great people from within our own community, including Gayle and Pam Beebe. But it's really up to our students. We can bring in some well-known and heavyweight speakers and students appreciate them, but I think our students also love to hear from our faculty, from people in the community.

Joyce Luy: Great. **I'm going to jump back over to Dr. Rogers for a second to sort of elaborate a little bit more on research opportunities available at Westmont.**

Dr. Rogers: Especially in the sciences, but really across the curriculum, the extra-curricular dimensions that students have access to are very important in rounding out their education. I can speak about the sciences more knowledgeably, so I'll just mention that students who want to pursue research with faculty will find opportunities.

Several of our faculty in the sciences have national grants that allow them to hire students over the summer, some do research off site and take students with them. They'll also take students with them to national conferences, where students will be able to present their research to the larger community. There's a dimension to research that you simply can't replicate in the classroom, especially if you want to go into graduate school in the sciences; research is absolutely essential. There is a huge difference between learning what science is in the classroom and in the laboratory and actually participating in it, especially with scientists who make their careers out of doing science. There's a world of difference, and these days in the sciences graduate schools are looking for that. It's awfully hard to get into graduate school without research experience.

In other areas across the campus, there are internships where students can work in town with actual practitioners in business, in churches, in law firms, etc., and there are research opportunities as well that are woven into classroom work. For example, in major honors projects students can take on a project themselves under the guidance and tutelage of a faculty member, and it becomes a capstone for their entire experience. They will write up their results, they will make a public presentation of it and then defend the research to a faculty panel, much like you would see in a master's or doctoral program. Research opportunities are not in short supply; faculty are very willing and very desirous of involving students in their research programs. From the point of view of a scientist, research opportunities do open doors for graduate school, and students who do research fare all the better in graduate school for having had those opportunities.

Joyce Luy: I'm going to go back to Diane Horvath, director of financial aid. **We have a lot of families who ask what the average debt of our graduating students is.**

Diane Harvath: Great question. Certainly we always encourage our families to be well aware of and make their students aware of the indebtedness they're taking on. We provide a report annually, and the statistics on our most recent report, which would have included our graduates for 2008, indicated there's actually two figures, there's one that is \$26,032 for our graduating seniors and that would be all the loans they took while being at Westmont. Usually that's for four years and that would include a Westmont loan as well as private loans. Then there's an amount that is \$16,333, which is the average indebtedness of our graduating seniors who have taken the federal student loans.

Joyce Luy: **What is the average national debt of a student graduating?**

Diane Harvath: It's around \$23,000 at the national level.

Joyce Luy: So at \$16,333, our debt is less than the national average. Great. This question is for Jane Higa. **"Is Westmont a culturally diverse campus?"**

Jane Higa: I have been at Westmont now for 20 years. As a Japanese-American coming in 20 years ago, I would not have been able to answer that in the affirmative. That always was something that I wanted to see, an area where I wanted to see Westmont grow. One of the things that has been so satisfying to me is that I do believe I can now say that we are a culturally diverse campus.

This last fall, the fall of 2008, 26 percent of our students were students of color. The first-year class was 27 percent students of color, so that is a real change. Eight years ago we were under 14 percent students of color. I have really loved seeing that change happen. I believe that being a diverse campus has so much to do with us being a liberal arts campus, being a place where there is a broad spectrum of perspectives and insights offered through the educational program of the college.

I have loved the fact that Westmont has embraced diversity growing out of our mission as a liberal arts college. I also have enjoyed the way in which Westmont has embraced our desire to be more diverse as a Christian college because we really do want to reflect the body of Christ. I've seen some great change and growth in that area and it has been very encouraging to me and to the college as a whole.



Joyce Luy: Back to Dr. Rogers. **Will we retain all our professors for this next year? There has been some concern over the economic situation; will we be retaining our professorial staff? Another part of that question is, is it difficult for students to get the classes they need when they need them?**

Dr. Rogers: That a great question. We've done a lot of careful and creative thinking about how to deal with this economic climate. We have all our full-time professors completely intact. I'll start by saying that the academic program really is our highest priority as far as funding goes, and all our professors are secure in their positions.

We have cut back slightly on our adjunct professors, that is, our part-time professors in areas where elective courses can be put on hold for a semester. We can get a little bit of savings there, but these are courses that are not essential to students' majors.

Students should have no problem registering for the courses they need, and they will always have great advising from faculty to help them throughout the years. In this tough economic downturn, I think our academic program is incredibly strong, it's intact, the offerings are still as numerous as you would find in any other year, with the exception of just a few elective courses. I think we've managed quite well with some creative thinking about how to handle the economic downturn and the impact on our budget.

Joyce Luy: Great. **I always talk to students about one of the most important statistics they can ask a college campus to find out what the life is really like is. What is the retention rate on the campus? Can you respond to that?**

Dr. Rogers: Sure. Our retention rate is really remarkably high compared with the national average. The four-year graduation rate nationally is 64 percent, so 64 percent of the entering class actually graduate. Our rate is nearly 10 percent higher. It's at 73 percent. And the spring-to-fall retention, that is those students who complete the spring semester and then come back in the fall is 94 percent, which is also well above the national average.

It is perfectly consistent with the sense of community here. We have people who love being here. By the time students graduate, they have very fond memories of this place, have built some incredible ties and have had a wonderful educational experience with professors in the classroom. So it doesn't surprise me that our retention is high. The numbers show that we are very healthy in this respect.

Joyce Luy: I always tell students that it's the most important statistic they can ask about because the higher it is, the more students are getting what they came for.

