



# The Search for a President

Central College, Pella, Iowa

The Board of Trustees has announced the search for the 21st president of Central College and is encouraging expressions of interest in this opportunity for engaged academic leadership. The search is launched in response to Dr. David Roe's decision to retire from the presidency at the end of the 2009-2010 academic year. Dr. Roe's impressive 12 year tenure will offer the next president a platform of accomplishment from which to engage the entire college community in focusing on Central's future.

Given Central's widespread recognition by *Barron's* as a "Best Buy," by *Money Magazine* as a "Best Value," by *Princeton Review* as a "Best Midwestern College," and by the Templeton Foundation in their *Character Building Honor Roll*, it is mildly surprising that Kaplan's recent guide of *Most Interesting Colleges* characterizes Central as a "Hidden Treasure." The next generation of leadership will have much to draw on when presenting an optimistic Central College message to an expanded audience of potential supporters and prospective students.

## ABOUT CENTRAL COLLEGE

Central College officially opened its doors in 1854 and has been committed to the ideals of liberal education ever since. In 1916, Central transferred from Baptist control and moved into a relationship with the Reformed Church in America (RCA) which strengthened the college as families within the denomination sent their sons and daughters to be educated for teaching and the ministry. Today, Central retains an enriching covenant with the RCA through which the value-centeredness of the college program is grounded. Central is proud of its ecumenical Christian tradition and church affiliation, a relationship that helps to define its commitment to inclusiveness, the pursuit of truth and a freedom of expression for all members of the college community.

Located in Pella (population 10,000), a picturesque town of Dutch heritage and architecture, the college is less than an hour southeast of Des Moines and enjoys significant respect and support from the surrounding community. Pella's unique blend of sophistication and small-town intimacy has been noted in several national publications, particularly during the late spring when it celebrates its annual Tulip Time Festival, now entering its 75th year. The presence of corporate headquarters (Pella Corporation, Vermeer and Precision Pulley) brings international exposure and national reputation to the community.





**The Program** – Central’s liberal arts program is characterized by its commitment to rigorous academic achievement, civic engagement, cultural enrichment, environmental stewardship and global perspectives. Offering 38 majors that lead to the Bachelor of Arts degree, Central also provides pre-professional programs and advising for chiropractic, dentistry, law, medicine, ministry, occupational therapy, optometry, physical therapy and veterinary medicine. A 3 + 4 program in architecture is offered in conjunction with Washington University and dual degree programs in engineering have been established with three other universities. Central’s programs are offered on a traditional two-semester calendar, and all students have common experiences within the academic program. A commitment to the development of speaking and writing skills is long-standing at Central and was one of the first of its kind nationally. The “Communication Across the Curriculum” program provides a means for all students to improve their rhetorical skills. In addition, all students experience “Intersections,” a first-year seminar in which faculty from all academic divisions provide an interdisciplinary introduction to the liberal arts and to academic life at Central.



The core curriculum at Central builds on this development of communication skills and first-year experience by striving to make students active learners and bridge builders between themselves and others, and among academic disciplines. Recently approved core curriculum revisions include 1) an interdisciplinary “Liberal Arts Capstone”; 2) a “Disciplinary Studies” sequence to provide for distribution requirements; 3) the “Global Perspective” experience requires competence in a second language, and either study abroad or coursework in both international and intercultural understanding; 4) a “Global Sustainability” component designed to encourage understanding of sustainability challenges; and 5) “Writing Intensive Courses” spread across four years.



In planning and implementing new initiatives, assessment and continuous improvement have become a basis for strategic planning and renewal. Central has chosen to follow the Academic

Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) as its accreditation model with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Central was admitted to AQIP in 2002 and recently completed its seven-year review and reaffirmation process. In March 2009, the HLC’s Review Panel reported that Central had met all five criteria for accreditation and had demonstrated a commitment to ongoing quality improvement.

Within this favorable academic climate, several focused initiatives help to illustrate the distinctive qualities of the Central College educational experience:

♦ **International Education** – Central is a nationally recognized leader in study abroad through the Central College Abroad (CCA) program. Since it was launched in 1965 at the Sorbonne, over 10,000 students from more than 400 American colleges and universities have joined Central students in international study for a semester, a full year or a summer. Today Central’s programs are located in Austria, China, England, France, Mexico, the Netherlands, Spain and Wales. Roughly 50 percent of each graduating class at Central has benefitted from experience in the CCA program.

♦ **Service-Learning** – Central’s wholesale commitment to service-learning was launched in 1994 when the college developed five academic courses with service-learning components. Today nearly 30 campus-based courses have service-learning components, 200-250 students each semester engage in course-based service-learning with up to 70 community partners, and all of Central’s study-abroad programs have service-learning options for students. Now coordinated by the Community-Based Learning Office, service-learning provides an effective pedagogy that is integral to the liberal arts. A student-led Central Volunteer Center extends the service ethic by promoting general community service opportunities. Central has been recognized repeatedly in the President’s Honor Roll of Distinguished Service-Learning Programs. In 2008, Central was named to the Carnegie Foundation’s prestigious “Community Engagement” classification.



♦ **Global Sustainability** – Central is committed to advancing a holistic and integrated worldview of sustainability. Changes to the physical plant, from renovations to major construction, highlight the commitment to developing a “green” campus. In 2003, the Vermeer Science Center was recognized as the first building in Iowa to achieve LEED certification, receiving a silver rating. Howard McKee Hall was the first residential building in the state to receive a gold LEED rating. The new education and psychology building (scheduled to open in August 2009) is vying for the state’s first platinum rating. A major programming commitment has been articulated through the addition of the global sustainability requirement in Central’s core curriculum; all students will encounter sustainability in their academic experiences at Central. Finally, the new Center for Global Sustainability Education will serve as a resource center and community sustainability partner and will work in conjunction with the community-based learning program. Central is a part of the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment with a long-term goal to become a climate neutral campus by the middle of this century.

♦ **Fine Arts** – Approximately 30 percent of the campus population is involved in the fine arts. In music, students can sing or play in one of 18 ensembles ranging from classical to jazz to pop. Seventy percent of ensemble participants are non-majors. Select musical ensembles tour each year (internationally every four years) and recent tours include Italy, Paris, British Columbia, London and New York. Students can explore painting or ceramics, or learn glass blowing in the only undergraduate glass blowing studio in Iowa. The Mills Gallery showcases art exhibitions throughout the year, including senior student exhibits in May. Theatre programs involve students in every facet of stage production with an intense schedule of three or four major productions annually. All students have the opportunity to interact closely with working artists through the Allison B. Allen Visiting Artist Residency. Similarly, the Geisler Library Writers Reading Program brings authors to campus each month to read publicly and discuss their work.

Students in all the fine arts programs have been active in off-campus and internship experiences, and the study abroad program offers notable opportunities for students to develop their talents. Supported by a Teagle Foundation grant, careful consideration is given to integrating the arts across the curriculum at Central, particularly through the first-year “Intersections” seminar.

♦ **Athletics** – With approximately 50 percent of all undergraduates participating in Central’s NCAA Division III program, athletics are integral to the college’s overall mission in which development of the whole person is essential. Varsity teams compete in baseball, basketball, cross country, football, golf, soccer, softball, tennis, track and field, volleyball and wrestling, with many sports providing significant JV experiences. The Central “Dutch” have an ongoing list of impressive accomplishments: 11 Division III national team championships, 25 Division III individual champions, 145 Iowa Conference titles, and 23 Iowa Conference “all-sports” titles. The strength of Central athletics, however, is reflected in more than winning records. Central student-athletes have received ESPN Academic All-American distinction 46 times and won NCAA Postgraduate Scholarships 20 times. The average GPA of all Central athletes in Spring 2008 matched the student body average of 2.9 for the same period. Freshmen student-athlete retention in 2007-08 was 83 percent compared to 79 percent for all students. Finally, it is a fundamental tenant of the “Dutch” athletics program that coaches promote classroom excellence by appropriating identifiable time for study and by encouraging student-athletes to request academic assistance from faculty, tutors and other support services when needed. The national Division III philosophy, originally authored by former Central President Kenneth Weller, is vividly reflected in the Central College athletics program.

**The Campus Community** – The effectiveness of Central’s distinctive program is fostered by the efforts of a gifted faculty and staff. They work closely with the full range of Central’s students in a supportive environment intended to develop the whole student. The resulting sense of community on the Central campus, in and out of the classroom, is palpable.



The Central College faculty, who recognize teaching as their primary responsibility while engaging in individual scholarship and service to the college, care deeply about their students. Roughly 88 percent of the 96 full-time faculty hold the Ph.D. or other terminal degree appropriate to their field. Together they provide an impressively talented and committed resource for the college. With a student-to-faculty ratio of 14:1, Central students are mentored in an environment that is personalized, collaborative and enriching. Student/faculty research projects are a common result of these mentoring relationships and often culminate in a senior honors thesis. While it is easy to collect anecdotal information about the effective impact of Central's faculty, the most comprehensive insight into student/faculty relationships is available in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) scores.

The 2007 average scores for Central's seniors on all five NSSE benchmarks of effective educational practice are at or above the averages of seniors at selected peer institutions. The most favorable comparison is seen in the Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE) benchmark, stemming from the breadth of learning opportunities provided for students by the Central faculty. On this benchmark, Central ranked in the top 10 percent of all colleges and universities participating in NSSE. Also favorable are scores for Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL) and Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI), both representative of the quality learning environment at Central.

Central's 1,700+ students enroll from 25 states and 14 countries, and bring an average ACT score of 24 (1100 SAT). About 80 percent are from Iowa where Central's reputation and draw has been the strongest in recent years, seven percent are from minority populations, and eight percent identify their church affiliation with the RCA. Serving an exclusively undergraduate student body and guided by an intentional philosophy of on-campus residence, 95 percent of all students live in residence halls and the sense of student camaraderie is uncommonly strong. Just over 98 percent of the student body receives some form of financial assistance throughout their four years

and 96 percent of those continuously enrolled will graduate in the traditional four-year period or less.

In addition to engaging in many of the distinctive program aspects (outlined earlier), students also embrace a wide range of extra-curricular activities designed to encourage their participation and develop their leadership. Life on the campus is enhanced by a student activities program through which over 80 clubs and organizations are active and accessible. The administration is currently designing a new model of leadership programming that will more widely fit Central's mission and that is expected to provide a multi-tiered program of leadership development throughout a student's career.

Meanwhile, the outcomes after four years of involvement in the Central College community are impressive. Central's educational program is widely valued beyond the campus as evidenced by current figures showing that 97 percent of Central grads are employed in the field of their choice or have enrolled in graduate school within one year of graduation.

**The Facilities** – A strategic planning focus on “Keeping Students First” is reflected in the strength and attractiveness of the facilities supporting Central's residential educational program. The stunning nature of the 160-acre campus and the 65-acre biology field station reinforces the active commitment to engaged learning and sustainability that runs so deeply throughout the entire Central program. The appearance and condition of Central's campus is uncompromised and deferred maintenance is well managed. Anchored by new facilities including the Weller Center for Business and International Studies, popular apartment-style residence spaces, the renovated and expanded Vermeer Science Center, the Kuyper Athletic Complex, and the development of a new education and psychology building to house education, psychology and communications studies, the campus master plan continues to meet the educational needs of faculty and students in an exciting and progressive fashion.

The Geisler Library, with 230,000 volumes and worldwide electronic access, stands at the academic



heart of the campus. The library staff works closely with faculty to provide students with the information they need to achieve their highest academic potential and to acquire research skills necessary for life-long learning. Located on the library's first floor, the Café@Geisler offers coffee, snacks and wireless Internet and extends the effectiveness of the library as a campus destination. In addition, an award winning European-style dining center and the newly renovated Maytag Student Center provide a hub for student, faculty and staff interaction at the center of the campus.



Additional information about Central College may be found at [www.central.edu](http://www.central.edu).

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP

The next Central College president will have the affirming opportunity to build on a decade of growth and institutional momentum as he or she formulates their own fresh vision for the college. A diverse community of talented faculty, staff, students, alumni and trustees is eager to support new leadership and contribute their best thinking to a consultative strategic planning process. The new president can make a measurable difference in the life of Central College by strengthening the college's program and enhancing its visibility. An agenda of opportunities, including but not limited to the following, will help to define the next president's success:



**Building a Fresh Perspective** – Changes in presidential leadership offer colleges a special moment of renewal and a time to review, reconsider and often recast elements of the institution's plan for the future. The new president will lead a dialogue about Central's future across all campus groups, thereby providing important opportunities for listening and receiving input for a fresh presidential perspective. Equally significant in this initiative is a desire by campus stakeholders to be included in these conversations and to contribute directly to the college's potential for improvement. By establishing this dialogue, new leadership can maximize the value of Central's model of shared governance and craft a plan for



possible new directions. Central's current planning model projects objectives on a rolling three-year timeline, thus lending itself nicely to this strategy for dialogue.

## Maintaining Financial Equilibrium

– Central College is dependent upon tuition revenues and has strategically accumulated capital debt for several state-of-the-art buildings. While turbulent market conditions have slowed progress on a goal of growing the endowment to \$100M, the commitment remains to build the endowment (currently \$64M) through donations, strategic investment management and a disciplined spending rate policy. To maintain Central's intergenerational equity, the president must be a strong financial manager, knowledgeable about academic business models, and capable of adjusting the business plan to maintain and improve the college's future financial security. Achieving a balanced operating budget has necessitated recent belt tightening and measured downsizing, largely in the area of staff support. The trustees' fiscal acuity will continue to provide invaluable support and counsel to the new president in this critical area of his/her administration.

## Extending the Resource Base –

Dependence on annual revenue streams from tuition, fees, gifts and grants will require that the new president provide engaged leadership in all areas of resource development.

♦ **Enhancing Enrollment Management Efforts** – Central's ongoing challenge to attract and retain over 400 new students each year is complex. A limited geographical draw, annual pricing and financial aid decisions, and a need to "brand" more effectively Central's distinctiveness all contribute to this complexity. With ongoing pressure to meet budgeted enrollment goals, there is a need to sharpen the college's competitive edge in order to attract a larger, more diverse, more academically able student body. The recent engagement of an enrollment management consulting firm should help to establish an increasingly robust operating plan for admission and financial aid, and to develop a more creative "brand" image for the college. The new president's early analysis of this material and his/her



involvement in conceptualizing stronger outreach will be an important item on the leadership agenda.

♦ **Enriching the Philanthropic Culture** – The new president will be asked to engage directly in efforts to increase endowment resources, the annual “Central Fund,” and selected facility improvements. Major growth of gift revenues takes center stage in Central’s future, encouraged by the projected success of Phase II of the Campaign for Central (\$36 M), achievement of the Kresge Challenge goal (\$3.6 M), responses to aggressive annual fund goals, and continued accomplishment within the deferred giving program. While continued facility development remains important, a primary need for endowment enhancement will become a priority. The new president will be expected to serve as the college’s “chief fundraiser” and to work with all constituencies to enrich Central’s philanthropic culture.



♦ **Continuing the Dialogue with External Agencies** – The extension of Central’s dialogue with government and community agencies is important. Grants and scholarships from federal and state sources have enabled measurable growth at Central and must be sustained in and beyond the current economic climate.



**Leading and Developing the Administration** – The Central president leads an administrative team that works through two separate senior-level councils. The current administrative structure includes an Enrollment and Financial Support Council and a Student Learning and Development Council. Their work is supplemented by a third group established shortly after President Roe announced his decision to retire, the Transitional Leadership Team. New leadership will have full discretion in determining the best structure for his/her management style and Central’s administrative needs. Moreover, a new president will have the opportunity to bring new people to several positions. With a search pending for a new academic vice president and the probable retirement of other presidential direct reports in the next couple of years, the



incoming president will have an opportunity to build a new administrative team. Identification of good-match talent when vacancies occur, delegation of appropriate responsibilities, evaluation of professional performance, empowerment of senior leadership, and oversight of productive and positive relationships with all Central constituencies will be critical activities for the new president.

**Articulating the Vitality of the Church Relationship** – Central College values its Christian heritage and the vital nature of its ongoing relationship with the Reformed Church in America. The value-centeredness of the campus environment draws on an ecumenical commitment to inclusiveness, acceptance and respect of all persons. The new president will be encouraged to practice openly his/her own Christian beliefs while celebrating the breadth of religious backgrounds on campus and the freedom of intellectual inquiry that is central to the life of the mind. A cohesive vision of Central as a place where Christian principles are openly valued, discussed and practiced, while avoiding the disparagement and exclusivity that occasionally arises from sectarianism is important.

**Moving from “Hidden Treasure” to Prominence** – Reflecting on Kaplan’s identification of Central’s “hidden treasure” status, Central’s distinctiveness deserves wider public recognition. The “branding” analysis is intended to develop a more penetrating public message for the admission marketplace, while helping the campus community to become more unified in its self-definition. The new president should be comfortable in actively extending the college’s image. Faculty, staff and students are doing work of a quality that deserves a prominent place in the public’s recognition of Central College. The next president can strengthen that recognition by his/her public profile, participation in regional and national higher education discussions, and an effective public communications strategy.

**Committing to Intercultural Competence** – Many within the Central community believe that a commitment to embrace diversity in all its forms must be sustained as a presidential priority. At the heart of this sentiment



is the notion that a basic tenet of the liberal arts includes exposure to and understanding of persons, cultures and ways of thinking that are different from one's own. With Central's position of national leadership in international education, a widely shared desire is to enroll increased numbers of international students for full-time study on-campus. This commitment to intercultural competence will engage the majority population at all levels to understanding diversity while reinforcing the effort to increase the numbers of all underrepresented groups on-campus.



### DESIRED ATTRIBUTES

Central's next president should possess a combination of personal qualities and professional experiences that match the agenda of opportunities presented in the previous section. The new president will bring complete integrity in every aspect of his/her life, high energy, a strong work ethic and deep spiritual grounding. Strong leadership credentials, meaningful academic accomplishments and understanding of the liberal arts are essential qualities. Beyond this, other specific attributes will be important. The successful Central president will be:



- ♦ A proven leader who inspires trust, builds respect and leverages the strengths within the Central community;



- ♦ A person of vision who builds consensus and understanding around new initiatives;

- ♦ A relationship builder, able to relate to all stakeholder groups;

- ♦ A strategic thinker, able to conceptualize, plan, and initiate institutional priorities, while managing and balancing fiscal responsibilities;

- ♦ An enthusiastic proponent for the residential, church-related, liberal arts college who will enjoy engaging student perspectives, participating in the broader Pella community, and favorably influencing Central's regional and national reputation;

- ♦ A person for whom the Christian faith is an integral, important and active part of his/her



being, and who can articulate and nurture the value of the Central College/RCA relationship;

- ♦ An eager fundraiser, experienced in building a positive culture of philanthropy;

- ♦ A person knowledgeable about the major issues facing independent higher education, including meaningful academic trends, enrollment strategies, best business practices and the complexities of governance;

- ♦ A strong communicator and gifted listener who can build bridges and who will be visible, direct and credible with all of Central's constituencies;

- ♦ A person of intercultural competence and global perspective, committed to diversity in its many forms.

### THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The Central College search committee will begin reviewing application materials in mid-summer and will continue until late in August when it will begin to narrow the applicant pool. Although applications will be accepted until the time that a new president is selected, candidates should submit materials by August 24 for the most favorable consideration. The new president will be expected to begin work on or about July 1, 2010.

Dr. Thomas B. Courtice of Academic Search, Inc., is assisting with this search. Nominators or prospective candidates may contact him at tom.courtice@academic-search.com or at 202-332-4049. Applications should include a letter of candidacy that responds to the opportunities for new leadership at Central and the desired attributes for a new president; a complete resume or vita; the names, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of three references, none of whom will be contacted without permission of the candidate.

All applications will be considered in full confidence and should be submitted to central@academic-search.com.

*Central College is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, dedicated to creating a diverse community*