We've recently updated the college’s Faculty/Staff Profile team, dedicated colleagues on the faculty and staff, and very capable students. And, we have a supporting community. “In the circles in which I move, Hope is held in very high esteem at both the state and national levels. People are saying about us that ‘Hope is clicking on all cylinders,’ and that’s very satisfying.”
Hope has great people, great programs and great facilities. People are the trump card, but Hope’s ability to educate the whole person intellectually, spiritually, socially and physically, and to do it with distinction, is the envy of many. We feel blessed and we’re grateful.”

As you look back on your nine years here, what have you been most pleased to have seen happen?
“I think I’m probably most pleased with the positive spirit and harmony that exist on campus today. This is a good place and a good time to be at Hope. We’ve recently updated the college’s mission statement and developed additional literature concerning the vision that motivates Hope, the core values that shape Hope, the qualities that distinguish Hope, the virtues that mark conversation at Hope, and the expectations for graduates who are anchored in Hope. All of the materials grew out of conversations involving more than 400 people from both on campus and among our greater constituency, and were unanimously approved in turn by the students, faculty, staff and trustees. The materials are a rich compendium of who we are for people who are or may wish to be aligned with Hope.”

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— President James Bultman ’63

President James Bultman ‘63 and Martha Tucker ‘63 Bultman are active participants in the life of the college (here they’re shown riding in the Homecoming Parade). On particularly busy evenings in the life of the campus community, they’ve been known to divide events between them so that they can collectively visit as many as possible. As he enters his 10th year as president, Dr. Bultman is pleased that Hope has been able to add new facilities like the Martha Miller Center for Global Communication, pictured in the background, to enable the college’s faculty and students to perform at the highest level as they teach and learn.”

“Some of the conditions under which we operate today are different than before. I would say that although the cost of higher education has always been a concern, it has a higher profile today than it did before. And that’s why I’m really proud that in the last three years Hope has had very modest increases relative to our peers. We’ve been very serious about trying to hold the line on increasing costs.”

“The demographic changes in our society are such that there will be fewer students in our traditional recruiting pool available to us. We are committed to continuing to broaden our recruitment in any way, both because we are called to make Hope an inviting option for all students who desire the college’s combination of academic excellence and vibrant faith, and because all of our students will benefit from a college experience that more fully reflects the diversity of our nation and world.”

“Expectations of accountability have also increased dramatically—not just from the students and families we serve but also from the state and federal governments, the latter of which are becoming more and more intrusive while providing much less of the revenue stream for higher education.”

“On a different level, I think that students are more service-oriented and less self-centered than they were a generation ago. It’s always been rewarding to work with young people, but that change in focus has given them exciting new priorities that inspire and challenge us in new ways.”

What are some of those things that you see the college needing to do to be prepared for the challenges ahead?

“Even as we celebrate our successes, much remains to be done. The college has key needs related to financial resources and facilities. Our current endowment, which seems large at $160 million, puts us at the bottom of our G.I.’s comparator group and does not provide enough resources currently to make a big impact overall in keeping us from being tuition-driven. Clearly the music department needs a facility for practice and performance that would do for them what the DeVos Fieldhouse has done for intercollegiate sport. Strong—and gratifying—student interest in living on campus has outstripped the available space. And, ever since the 1980 Van Raalte Hall fire displaced the administrative offices into the DeVos Student and Cultural Center, our students have lacked the sort of center for co-curricular activities found at virtually every other college and university in the country.”

“The admissions office is an example of the sort of challenge that we are facing. Those are some of the major needs that we are going to provide the kind of support and space needed to serve students and faculty.”

Any thoughts in closing?

“All colleges will need to find their niche in the sea of higher-education opportunities, and I’m very pleased that Hope has found its. Our overall passion is to provide an exceptional education in a caring Christian environment, and my personal passion is that Hope would be at the same time exceptionally educational and vibrantly Christian. That is a path not often traveled by any institution, especially when the Christian dimension is not narrowly defined, prescriptive or parochial. Rather, Hope is ecumenical in nature while rooted in the Reformed Christian faith, and provides opportunities as opposed to requirements.

“We have appreciated the prayers and support of the extended Hope family as they have partnered with us in providing such a rich collegiate experience for our students. Martyte and I are grateful for the opportunity to be a part of that partnership and look forward to the future of Hope with great confidence and expectation.”