Albright College Celebrates its Sesquicentennial
1856 - 2006

History in the Making...
The College’s hallmarks are connecting fields of learning, collaborative teaching and learning, and a flexible curriculum that allows students to create an individualized education.

From the President

On January 3, 1856, a little school opened with just 60 students. It was a three-year collegiate institute called Union Seminary, housed in a three-story brick building with a cupola and a front porch in New Berlin, Pa. Union Seminary grew out of the heritage of Jacob Albright and the Evangelical Association that followed his preaching and leadership.

A bit later, two other schools sprung up from that same understanding of the necessity of higher education for the members of the church — Albright Collegiate Institute in Myerstown and Schuylkill Seminary, at 6th and Walnut in Reading. Over time, these institutions grew into four-year colleges and those colleges merged together into what today is Albright College on North 13th Street.

As Albright College celebrates its 150th anniversary, the College has grown to 1,650 traditional students, and 600 accelerated degree and graduate students. We offer classes in nine locations. We attract students from across the country, the world — and from North 13th Street, too! We have nearly 17,000 living alumni. Over the past century-and-a-half some 25,000 graduates have left Albright to make their mark on Berks County, our nation and our world. And happily, some 3,000 of them have elected to make Berks County their home!

Albright is also a major economic force: with 500 employees, 2,000 students and countless visitors, the College has a positive annual economic impact on the Reading and Berks communities of more than $36.9 million.

As we reach 150, much has changed at Albright and in our world. But the heart and mission of Albright remains the same. We are a private, independent college dedicated to providing a rigorous liberal arts education. We serve the public interest and the larger society of which we are a part. So our Sesquicentennial is not just a celebration of the past. Our theme, History in the Making, looks forward, and in this special year we will celebrate not only who we have been, but who we are today, and what we hope to be in the future.

During our Sesquicentennial we celebrate the power of the liberal arts and the transforming effects they can have on individual lives.

We celebrate our good neighbors and friends in Reading and Berks County, the place we have called home for so long.

We celebrate with grateful hearts the many gifts and sacrifices that have been made to nurture and grow Albright over 150 years — from our courageous and visionary founders to the many benefactors who continue to support us today. There are many people who share our dreams and who are helping us to make them real.

And we celebrate our future! Our new stadium, our new Schumo Center for Fitness and Well-Being that will be built soon, our new Science Center soon to come, and much more.

We welcome you to Albright during our Sesquicentennial year and always — for a lecture, an art exhibit, a concert, a play, a game, a class, our athletics and fitness facilities, our childcare center, our computer training and consulting, or any of dozens of events going on at any given time on our campus. We hope you will celebrate with us!

Lex O. McMillan III
President

Albright College... is a nationally ranked, private college with a rigorous liberal arts curriculum and an interdisciplinary focus.

About Albright College...

Albright College dates its beginning to the founding of Union Seminary, a three-year collegiate institute, in 1856. Today’s Albright College was formed by later mergers with several institutions of higher learning founded in the 19th century by the Evangelical Association and the United Evangelical Church — Union Seminary/Central Pennsylvania College; Schuylkill Seminary/Schuylkill College; and Albright Collegiate Institute/Albright College.

Today, Albright is affiliated with the United Methodist Church. Albright has been on its campus in northeast Reading since 1929.

Who was Jacob Albright?

Jacob Albright, after whom the College is named, was a Pennsylvania German evangelical preacher and the founder of the Evangelical Association (later the Evangelical United Brethren Church). Born in 1759 as Johannes Jacob Albrecht, his family changed their name to Albright after his death in 1808.
The Essence of Albright

As a high school student, Angela Brady, Albright class of 2003, loved art. She saw it as a way of communicating and educating others. She also loved scientific concepts, especially the abstract ones.

Brady visited art schools but felt there was a void in the lack of science offerings. She knew she wanted to be able to explore various disciplines and discover new skills and interests. That’s when she made her decision to attend Albright College and pursue her dream—a career in medical illustration.

“Both the disciplines of art and science encourage and inspire creativity, alternative ways of thinking and problem solving,” Brady says. “To me, it’s only natural that art and science go hand-in-hand.”

Albright has a long history as a liberal arts institution—150 years long. What does it mean to be a liberal arts institution? It means to educate broadly, stimulate the mind and engage lifelong learners. It means to encourage students to look at the world more expansively, think more critically and make connections between different disciplines. It means to educate the whole person.

“The liberal arts education deepens our understanding of what it means to be a human being, and helps our students to discover within themselves powers and gifts that they may not fully understand when they begin their educations,” says President Lex McMillan.

The world has changed rapidly. In fact, a Department of Labor report projects that 80 percent of the children entering kindergarten will eventually have jobs that don’t even exist today. In this type of world, a liberal arts education is what will equip students with the skills to cope with and adapt to this change.

An Interdisciplinary Approach

One of Albright’s hallmarks is a flexible curriculum that allows students to create an individualized education. Fifty-eight percent of the Class of 2005 graduated with a dual, combined or interdisciplinary concentration.

Today, in addition to 11 interdisciplinary areas of concentration such as psychobiology, biochemistry, crime & justice, and Latin American studies, students have the option of pairing any combination of concentrations.

The liberal arts, interdisciplinary studies and a faculty that puts its students’ needs above anything else form the backbone of what Albright College has been and is today.

Angela Brady, Albright class of 2003, recently received her master of science degree in biomedical visualization from the University of Illinois, says, “The flexibility that Albright offers is unique. You not only receive an education, you receive the education you want.”

After completing a triple major in English, sculpture and film, Michael P. Gray, class of 1998, went on to earn a master’s degree and a doctorate in American literature at the University of Essex in Colchester, England. “At Albright I learned to think,” Gray says. “I learned new ways of seeing and challenging the world around me. When I walked out of Albright’s doors, I walked out armed with a philosophy by which I could live my life and continue to grow.”

Albright’s first interdisciplinary program, psychobiology, was created in 1969. Albright received a matching grant from the National Science Foundation that made it possible to purchase laboratory equipment to begin the program. Not only was it Albright’s first interdisciplinary program, it was the first undergraduate program of its kind in the country. Biochemistry soon followed in 1970 and was the first of its kind in the region.

The decades since have seen the creation of interdisciplinary programs such as child and family studies, environmental studies, optical physics (the only such program nationwide at a small college), and three Johnson Centers for Interdisciplinary Studies, created with a $600,000 grant in 1999.

“[The flexibility of Albright offers is unique. You not only receive an education, you receive the education you want.”] - Angela Brady, Albright class of 2003
A Glimpse of the Past
...life in 1856

Co-education: Both "ladies and gentlemen" were admitted to Union Seminary, although women had more restrictions. Men and women only met in the classroom, in church services and at an occasional supervised outing. They lived in separate houses and even ate in separate rooms.

Union Seminary, founded in 1856, is the parent institution to Albright College. It was a three-year collegiate institute, not a theological seminary.

Women's styles: Special occasion dresses were supported by hoops and sleeves were bell shaped. Work or everyday dresses were simple and made from cotton. Younger women wore looser corsets with natural waistlines. Bright colors such as salmon, purple and blue were popular. Women wore their hair parted in the middle, covering their ears and pulled back.

Men's styles: Men wore more manufactured shirts that were usually white, with stripes, checks, small prints and color. Men also wore smocks that went down to their knees to protect their clothing and to provide warmth. Young men and boys wore dark wool sea caps with leather bills. Hairstyles were oiled with macassar oil and long on top so hair could be sectioned and combed into a high wave at the center of the forehead.

Music: Johannes Brahms and Franz Liszt were popular composers in Europe. In the U.S., Benjamin Russell Hanby wrote the song "Darling Nelly Gray"

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Price of an education at Union Seminary...1856

Tuition (without scholarship) $26.00
Boarding, per week - $1.62 - $2.00

in 1856. Ole Bull was a Norwegian violinist whose imaginative and wild playing style intrigued Americans. Banjos, flutes and pianos were also commonly played instruments.

Singer Jenny Lind and orchestra leader Louis Jullien were popular, as was composer Stephen Foster. Foster wrote many songs that are still with us today, including: "Oh! Susanna," "My Old Kentucky Home" and "Camptown Races."

Food: Condensed milk was invented in 1856 and was used in a variety of rich desserts. Potato chips were created during the 1850s. They were originally eaten by the upperclass with forks and were called "potato crunches." Later they were packaged in boxes and called "Saratoga chips."

Books, Newspapers and Magazines: "Penny papers" were popular with the "common man" and Godey's Lady Book was a popular ladies magazine. Harper's New Monthly Magazine introduced magazines that had more pictures and fiction excerpts.

In 1856, Harper's Weekly was launched in New York City. Books published that year included: Richard Burton's First Footsteps in Africa; Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Aurora Leigh; and Gustave Flaubert's Madame Bovary.

The telegraph became the most inexpensive method of communication in 1856.
Historic Gift Brings Center to Life

The Schumo Center for Fitness and Well-Being is named after Margaret K. Schumo, of Wyomissing, who recently donated $4.75 million to Albright to build the wellness center. The gift is the largest donation in Albright’s history.

When asked why she gave this generous gift to Albright, Schumo said, “What’s good for Albright is good for Berks County.”

The College will utilize the new center to offer programs encouraging people to live more healthy lifestyles. A committee of faculty and students will plan both credit and noncredit programs to take place in the center, including programs that will be open to the community.

According to Albright President Lex McMillan, work will begin soon on the project. McMillan said the College plans to have the new facility open by spring 2007.

“What’s good for Albright is good for Berks County.”

- Margaret K. Schumo

The Schumo Center for Fitness and Well-Being will be a two-story, 22,000-square-foot addition to the Bollman Center, the College’s indoor athletic facility, located on the west side of North 13th Street.

The new facility will include a cardiovascular fitness room, a weight room, an aerobic room, a nutrition classroom with kitchenette, a meditation area, conference space, an atrium and a concession area.

“Albright strives to offer students a holistic education, one that educates the mind, body and spirit,” said President McMillan. “This new center will greatly expand our ability to offer students and the larger community educational opportunities to improve overall health and wellness. This building will also bolster our athletic programs, which are an integral part of the total Albright experience.”
The Johnson Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies has been expanding the Latin American and Caribbean curriculum over the last three years, says Betsy Kiddy, Ph.D., assistant professor of history and director of the center. “We have a dynamic program that includes faculty from more than nine disciplines in a truly interdisciplinary program.”

According to Mary Jane Androne, Ph.D., professor of English, the number of students choosing dual concentrations has multiplied since the 1990s. “It’s a good thing for students to see the interconnectedness of disciplines,” Androne says, “but it’s also good for the faculty. For me, it’s been a transforming experience to look at sociology, psychology, political science, art, history...It’s allowed me to embrace a lot of different fields I wouldn’t normally have seen.”

The flexibility of Albright’s curriculum, allowing students to combine two and even three concentrations, is truly what makes it unique.

The Albright Faculty

“Through the work of our creative faculty, students have a far greater range of curricular options than is typical for a college of our size,” says President McMillan.

The faculty recognize the greater good of interdisciplinarity and understand the benefit to students, says Andrea E. Chapdelaine, Ph.D., acting vice president for academic affairs. “We’ll change careers seven times on average in a lifetime, so to be narrowly defined, narrowly trained, narrowly skilled, is not going to serve our students well.”

Karen Campbell, Ph.D., P. Kenneth Nase chair in biology, says the new Science Center is actually being designed with this collaborative factor in mind. With shared instrumentation, labs and research space, and offices grouped together not by department, but by collaborative work, the building itself reflects Albright’s interdisciplinary focus.

Above all, the relationships that develop between faculty and students through faculty/student research projects, close academic advising or just in class have always been the glue that holds it all together. “Each student is an individual,” says Campbell. “We know who our students are. That’s what Albright is.”

The Science Center – A Cutting Edge Facility for the 21st Century

The state-of-the-art, interdisciplinary Science Center will be a catalyst for positive change and growth at Albright.

The 89,000-square-foot, four-story building will be located at the northeast corner of 13th and Union Streets and will be connected to Memorial Chapel on the Albright campus. The new facility will replace Merner-Pfeiffer-Klein Hall of Science, built in 1929. When the Science Center opens, the old building will be renovated to provide much-needed space for classrooms and offices.

Tentatively scheduled for occupancy in late 2007, construction will begin when the College raises the $26 million project cost. The College is currently engaged in the Berks County Capital Campaign, which has a goal of receiving $2.5 million from local businesses, foundations and individuals. The College will seek the remainder of the funds through a national campaign, as well as through state and federal grants.

Science Center Features:

- Multi-media capability in all classrooms and labs
- Data access to all students through wireless networks
- Expanded classroom and lab space for biology, chemistry and physics, as well as for interdisciplinary work
- 18 dedicated student-faculty research spaces
- A large gathering space for public and student science events
- A greenhouse
- An observatory
- A modern science library

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Albright in the Community...

- Albright students, faculty and staff volunteered more than 9,000 hours during the 2004-2005 school year.
- Each year, the College invites the public to dozens of lectures, films, and theatre and musical performances.
- More than 100 Albright physicians live or work in Berks County.
- Albright College awards more than $1 million a year to Berks graduates through Shirk Scholarships.

Albright’s Spirit of Volunteerism

Every day, Albright Food Services donates extra food from the dining halls to community organizations like the Salvation Army, feeding local people in need.

More than 65 percent of Albright students volunteer in places including the Reading School District, Opportunity House, Nolde Forest, Reading Hospital, and Habitat for Humanity.

“Once our students go out into the community and see the needs, they understand that they can make a difference,” said Karen Evans, acting director of the Volunteer Center.

Albright Arts and Culture add Vitality to Berks Community

The Freedman Gallery at Albright has received national recognition for its innovative exhibits, focusing on American contemporary artists. Dozens of lectures, exhibits, plays, concerts and events are open to the public every year.

The F. Wilbur Gingrich Library at Albright is open to the community.

The Albright Speaker’s Bureau provides expert speakers to local organizations at no cost. Speakers are available on many topics including the arts, science, computer technology, health, economics, spirituality, travel, politics and sports.

Albright Adds $36.9 Million to Berks Economy Each Year

The anchor of northeast Reading, the growth of Albright is part of the city’s renaissance. Albright has a powerful economic impact on Berks County — $36.9 million annually is spent by Albright College, students, visitors and local employees.

$1M Annually to Berks Students through Shirk Scholarships

Albright awards more than $1 million each year to graduates of Berks high schools. Established to honor the late Professor Gene Shirk and encourage students to follow his ideals of community service and leadership, Shirk Scholars provide at least 50 hours of service a year.

Albright Science Experts Serve and Protect Berks County

- Phillip Dougherty, Ph.D., professor of chemistry, and his students, have spent thousands of hours monitoring water quality in Blue Marsh Lake and Lake Ontelaunee. When Lake Ontelaunee was threatened by agricultural dumping, Dougherty provided the expert testimony that stopped the threat.
- David Osgood, Ph.D., associate professor of biology, has spent several years conducting research on local wetland restoration projects, with help from his students. Dr. Osgood has also provided expert assistance to Reading’s RiverPlace Revival initiative.
- Karen Campbell, Ph.D., P. Kenneth Nase chair of biology, brings science to city children in their playgrounds through the summer Albright Explorers program.
- Albright has served as host of the annual Berks County Science & Engineering Fair for approximately 50 years.

Albright Celebrates Diversity

The diverse Albright College student body includes 15 percent students of color and five percent international students. This diversity adds to the educational experience of students and to the vibrancy of the Albright community.

Think You Can’t Afford It? Think Again!

Financial Aid is Available. Albright provides financial aid to 95% of students. About 25% of Albright students are the first members of their families to attend college.