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Why was St. Norbert College never made a University?

Jerome Moscinski '63

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August 2016

Question:

Dear Abbot Pennings,

Why was St. Norbert College never made a University?

Jerome Moscinski '63

Answer:

Dearest Jerome,

I'm certainly most appreciative of your inquiry about the name of our beloved school. Surely there are other readers who have also pondered this question. Not myself being aware of any "official" definition that distinguishes a college from a university, I felt inclined to consult with President Tom Kunkel on your interesting question. It is his understanding that institutions may simply choose a name that meets their fancy.

It may interest you to know that there has, in fact, been conversation about the rightness of our name within living memory. It seems to me that it was prompted by the heightened focus on international students and programming that led to the building of our Bemis International Center during the tenure of our fifth president (dear Tom Manion). Several of our esteemed professors lobbied for a change in name to St. Norbert University. Their arguments, most reasonably, derived from the fact that in many other countries of the world the term "college" may refer to a high school, while the word "university" is reserved for higher education.



Ask The Abbot

As the founder of St. Norbert College, and having a prime seat in the center of campus throughout the years, I, Abbot Bernard Pennings, hold the answers to many of your burning questions about the college.

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Although it is certainly important to keep in mind the needs of our brethren overseas, nevertheless I was quite gratified at the decision to hew to our own traditions. There is no indignity attached to the word “college,” which seems to me the most fitting of terms, honoring as it does both our history and our mission. For while some may assume that a university is a large place offering a veritable multiplicity of programs for both graduates and undergraduates, our own name betokens a community where intimacy and personal attention may be expected and even celebrated.

Responses to “Ask the Abbot” questions are penned by St. Norbert College staff in the name of Abbot Bernard Pennings, O.Praem., who founded St. Norbert College in 1898.

St. Norbert College

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