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With Brian Bruess becoming our eighth president in July, I'm wondering who led the college after yourself, and before President Kunkel. Can you share?

Abigail Stewart '19

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February 2017

Question:

Dear Abbot Pennings,

“With Brian Bruess becoming our eighth president in July, I’m wondering who led the college after yourself, and before President Kunkel. Can you share?”

Abigail Stewart '19

Answer:

My dearest Abigail,

Ah, yes, these pivotal times at our beloved St. Norbert College are most exciting! It is a joy to know we will welcome our dear alumnus Brian Bruess and his family back home to St. Norbert come July. Brian and his wife, Carol (Sessler) Bruess, are both graduates of our fine Class of 1990.

With each change in president, our beloved college has witnessed renewal in spirit and vitality. It was the year 1955 when I retired from my presidential vocation, after founding St. Norbert College in 1898 and subsequently guiding it for 57 years.

Following in my footsteps was my beloved confrere Father Dennis Burke, himself a distinguished alumnus (Class of 1928) and a visionary who led the college until 1968. He foresaw the need for the college to expand, anticipating that our enrollment would eventually reach 2,000, and promoted efforts that were essential to achieve our long-term success.

In 1968, the estimable Robert Christin became our third



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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president. He implemented a course system and organized academics into a much-needed divisional structure. Dear Neil Webb, a former faculty member and vice president, became our fourth president in 1973. Under his leadership, the first substantial endowment was established.

In 1983, my friend Thomas Manion took the helm with aplomb. He brought national recognition to the college, to my intense gratification, and led the expansion of facilities and the development of academic programs. Enrollment grew to the 2,000 students that Dr. Burke had predicted years earlier. Under President Manion's leadership, the college renovated old buildings and constructed new ones including the Bemis International Center. Upon Dr. Manion's retirement in 2000, my dear fellow theologian William Hynes became our sixth president. President Hynes was the visionary and driving force behind the Mulva Library, and instituted many advances in the academic area.

In 2008, our beloved Thomas Kunkel was inaugurated as our seventh president. And oh, what extraordinary developments have taken place on our dear campus since that historic moment in our history. Dear me, sometimes I find myself quite lost amongst our wealth of new buildings. The growing reputation of the college that has come alongside such advances warms my venerable heart. And now, we eagerly await the arrival of President-elect Bruess in this long line of estimable leadership, and look forward to his guidance over the years to come.

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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