

BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE

OF THE

NEW CHURCH



FOUNDED IN 1877

March 26, 2025

Re College's Financial Sustainability

Dear Students, Faculty, Coaches, Staff, and Admin,

After a comprehensive review of our financial position, we have made difficult—but essential—changes to protect our core academic offerings and position the College for sustainable growth. We have taken strong and necessary action to ensure the long-term sustainability of our mission: to provide a distinctive higher-education offering grounded in the Heavenly Doctrine. This is a turning point—not an ending.

I took a decisive step by reducing the equivalent of 20 full-time positions (FTE), impacting 29 individuals—colleagues who have given much of their lives to this place, and whose absence will be deeply felt.

This decision is a necessary step for our survival. To ensure this institution, rooted in a distinctive vision almost 150 years old, can thrive for the next 150 years.

Today's approach focuses on three critical areas:

1. Student Life and Athletics

We are restructuring Student Life and discontinuing all 11 NCAA Division III athletic programs, our club hockey team, and associated athletic staff and trainers. These programs will remain active through the end of the academic year, and all affected students will receive full support. A new model—robust, inclusive, and financially sustainable—will rise in the form of Club Sports. This change accounts for a net reduction of 11 FTEs.

2. Information Technology

We are fully outsourcing our IT operations, encompassing everything from cybersecurity to infrastructure management, support services, and other related areas. This results in a reduction of 4 FTEs.

3. Streamlining Student and Institutional Support

To better align our functions with the College's evolving needs we are reorganizing across Annual Giving, Alumni Engagement, Advancement and Development, Marketing and Communications, Internal and External Partnerships, the Bookstore, Financial Aid, and Academic Advising. This results in a net reduction of 5 FTE positions.

The review of athletics costs revealed an untenable financial reality. According to benchmarking data from 69 DIII institutions without men's football, athletic expenses should comprise roughly 3% of an institution's budget. Ours, conservatively, stand at 12% and climb as high as 21% when accounting for overhead. That places us at 400–700% of the national benchmark. This level of financial expenditure is unsustainable. And the choice, due to NCAA requirements, is binary: maintain ten teams or none. (NCAA, Trends in Division III Athletics Finances, November 2021, p. 17)

I had hoped to preserve club hockey, given its storied legacy. But even stripped of overhead, its cost remains too high. I share the grief this will bring especially considering the magnitude of hockey's history in the college and in Bryn Athyn.

This is hard. But the deeper injustice would be to ignore reality and jeopardize the future of our beloved College. Since 2007, Bryn Athyn College's total cumulative operating deficit is \$48.7 million.

I am committed to ensuring the College continues to produce exceptional outcomes. As Neil Simonetti, Computer Science and Mathematics Department Chair, recently told me, students have spent over one million hours immersed in study —through a Swedenborgian / New Church lens. These are the treasures we must protect.

But the facts are clear. We are facing a \$3.4 million “true deficit.” We must stabilize —not later, not soon —now.

As President, my charge is clear. I must:

1. Ensure the best possible outcomes for each of our students.
2. Protect the affordability of our distinctive, mission-driven education.
3. Preserve this institution for generations to come.

Today's actions reflect months of deliberation and counsel, including input from the Core Cabinet, the Controller, the Finance Committee, the College Executive Committee, and the

Board of Trustees. I also invited the Chief Academic Officer, the Dean of Faculty, Faculty Council Steering Committee, and the Planning, Finance and Outcomes Committee to both inform and welcome them to share their perspectives.

As I weighed this decision, three more touchstones stood out and stayed with me:

- In 2013, a Contingency Committee Plan —approved by Faculty Council and the Board —stated that if the College’s endowment fell below \$40M, planning for downsizing or closure must begin. If it dropped below \$37M, implementation would be immediate.
- On December 20, 2023, the Board approved a limited excess drawdown of the endowment, capping total excess endowment payout at \$1.5M across FY25–FY27.
- In January 2025, the College’s endowment fell below \$37 million.

We have crossed the threshold. There is no more room for delay or alternatives.

And yet, even in this moment of loss, there is hope. The core of our mission —our academic offerings and our extraordinary faculty —remains intact. No instructional positions were eliminated. This was by design. Our students deserve the depth, challenge, and inspiration that only this faculty can provide.

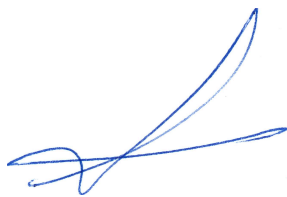
And so, we turn toward the future.

Nobody embraces change for its own sake. But sometimes, change is the only path to survival. And survival, when aligned with vision, can give way to renewal. We’ve trimmed back not to retreat, but to give our roots room to breathe —and from that resilience, new growth will come.

These are difficult days —but they can also be defining ones. I ask you to join me not only in acknowledging the gravity of this moment but in reimagining the possibilities that lie ahead.

Let us begin again —with clear eyes, renewed purpose, and collective resolve.

With respect and determination,



Sean Connelly
President