

the program did not agree and dropped out in protest. This was kept very quiet. Had more students known of it, I believe the paper would have given it coverage.

A half-century later, this February, I had an enjoyable meeting with CSP's current President Dr. Brian Friedrich. No ruffled feathers this time. Of course, I'd only been back on campus a short while. Our discussion and my strong interest focused on how CSP has developed into the tremendously successful and academically diverse University it is today. Fifty years is a long time yet, when I graduated in 1972, no way could I have imagined what has transpired here. At that time there were about 600 students. Now there are nearly 6,000. CSP went from having as few as 6 undergraduate programs to 72. Back then, in every Degree program, religion classes were required. To some extent, religion classes remain in course work, often focused on service, and aren't explicitly Lutheran-only.

President Friedrich was a student at CSP in 1979. By 1987 enrollment topped 1,000 for the first time and it has continued to grow ever since. CSP has added a number of remarkable buildings. The Gangelhoff Center was built in 1993, through a generous donation from Ron and Doris Gangelhoff. CSP students now benefit from the excellent Pearson Theatre and Arts Center as well as Seafoam Stadium. Between 2013 and 2018 enrollment grew from 3,000 to 5,000 students and now in 2022 continues to grow.

Here are some excerpts from my conversation with President Friedrich.

RG: From my perspective, CSP has seen remarkable development and expansion in the last fifty years. How do you account for CSP's transformation from a religiously conservative teacher and ministerial prep college to a now secular university featuring a wide span of degree programs?

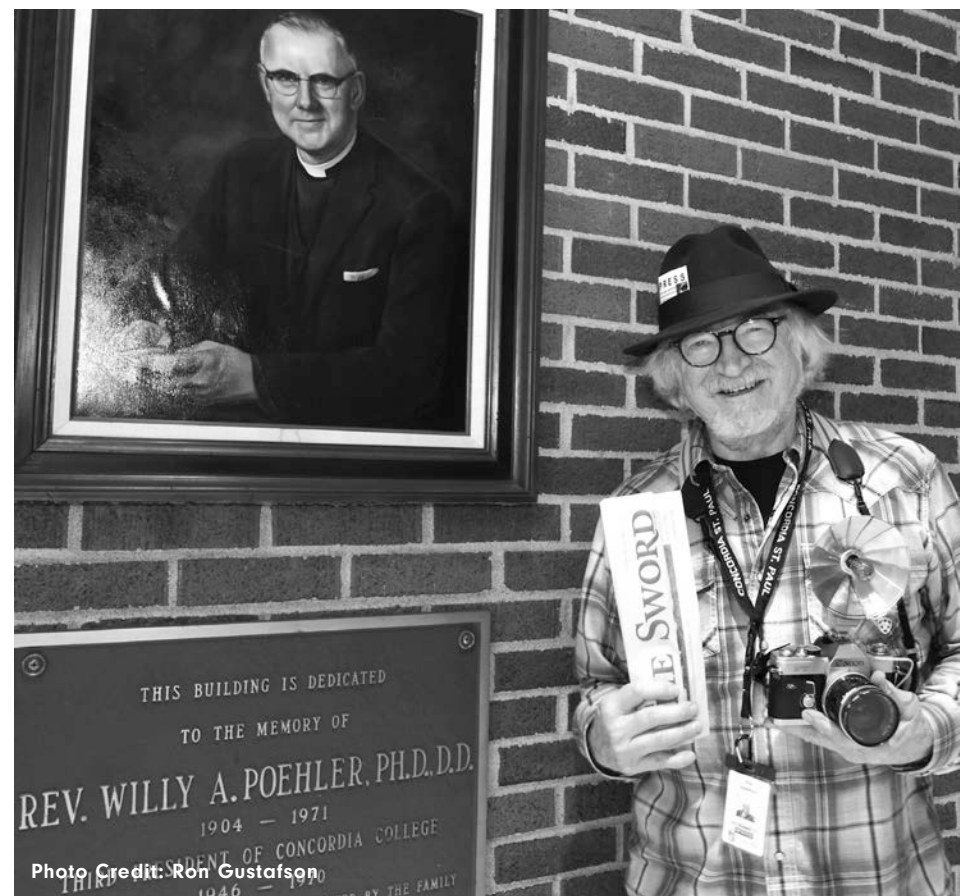
PF: The growth is impressive and I have to say it's not secular, it's diverse. CSP's development is grounded in innovation. It was starting already when you were here with the MTEPS program. African American and Native American students were welcomed and encouraged to go into teaching. In the '80s, CSP began to focus on adult students enrolling in degree completion programs. Staff worked to accommodate adult students with evening classes and offering off-campus [options.] Business degrees were added. CSP grew into offering significant Arts degree programs including Music and Theatre.

RG: What do you see for CSP going forward?

PF: CSP's Strategic Plan is titled Vision 2024. It includes the goal of expanding enrollment to 7,000 students. Our vision is to be a Christ-centered nationally prominent university known for innovation and excellence that fosters success for all students.

At this point Pres. Friedrich provided me with a printed synopsis of the Vision 2024 Strategic Plan. (It's likely all who are interested may obtain a copy.) To me, a striking aspect, it appears the initiative plans to highlight and raise and rekindle the profile of CSP as an LCMS school with a higher emphasis and accenting its Christ-centered identity compared to recent years. An example of this approach can be found in comparing two recent issues of the quarterly "CSP Magazine." In Winter 2022, out of five main articles "God" and "Christian Gospel" are in three headlines. In the Fall 20-21 issue, out of seven main articles, there's no mention of God in any headline, although other words pointing to Lutheranism are used. This is an observation, not a judgment. Is it out of context? A bit perhaps, however, in journalism, headlines tell the story.

In writing this article I conferred with a former Prof. from Concordia University Nebraska, where Dr. Friedrich served as President prior to CSP. I learned that in recent years the LCMS has embraced an evolving concept of Educational Ministry. It used to be about preparing students for work in the church. Now it's about preparing students to carry Ministry into everyday life through their chosen vocations. In this regard, it appears Pres. Friedrich is the right person in the right place at the right time. To conclude, I realize that while much has changed in 50 years, CSP's foundation as an LCMS school remains strong.



FINAL REMARKS FROM PRESIDENT FREDRICK

It was a joy to meet with Ron Gustafson '72 and talk about CSP in the past and present. Our conversation reinforced one of the joys I've had in being interviewed by editors of The Sower (student newspaper of Concordia University, Nebraska) and The Sword (our student newspaper) over the past 30 years. The editors' questions, insights, and perspectives have helped me see the institution from a student's perspective. Sometimes that perspective has been quite different from mine. In those instances, it has been instructive for me to discuss and dialogue with the student editor about the issue du jour. Reading Ron's contribution to this edition of The Sword was a similar reminder.

To be sure there have been many changes at CSP during the past five decades. Change is constant and inevitable. One of the things, however, that has not changed is CSP's mission. Presidents, faculty, staff, students come and go. Yet, the mission remains. This year, in fact, we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of our mission statement: "The mission of Concordia University, St. Paul, a university of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, is to prepare students for thoughtful and informed living, for dedicated service to God and humanity, and for enlightened care of God's creation, all within the context of the Christian Gospel."

Though this mission statement did not exist per se when Ron and I were students here, its essence did. The work of CSP past, present, and future is "to prepare students." That is why I am here and that is my deep and abiding commitment to our current students. The vision of the institution may change from time to time but its mission does not. I am thrilled with what is taking place at CSP today and honored to serve alongside a gifted faculty, staff, and administration to recruit, retain, and graduate students so that they are prepared to bless the world with the gifts, talents, and abilities God has given them.