
The Promise of PC

ADDRESS TO CAMPUS COMMUNITY
BOB STATON, PRESIDENT OF PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE
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For nearly 140 years, Presbyterian College has been a place of promise.

- It is a place that shapes and guides the promise of its students to become leaders and contributors to their communities and workplaces.
- It is a place that promises a dedication to service and a devotion to excellence.
- It is a place that pledges to give students the skills and capacities to achieve great things, both on and off campus.

The Promise of PC stretches back to our beginnings, as leaders like William Plumer Jacobs stressed the importance of education that prepares students for “lives of usefulness and honor.”

Today, I am excited to share with you a strategic plan that extends *The Promise of PC* for current and future students, faculty, and employees and delivers on PC’s promise at a time in our history when what we do here is more important than ever.

“Promise” is a powerful word. It ties people together for a common purpose. It conveys commitment, dedication and intent. It binds the one making the promise to delivering on the terms. Today, I assure you that we will deliver on this promise to our students, faculty, staff and alumni.

The Promise of PC is our commitment to developing the whole student. It involves conveying both practical knowledge and the ability to think, to reason, and to communicate. It prepares students for different careers while also understanding the importance of service to others. This commitment is essential at a time when people question the value of higher education and the ability of students to succeed in a 21st-century global economy. The students that we develop here become alumni who succeed in many different pursuits after graduation, and our vision for *The Promise of PC* is to prepare students to achieve their best potential in a rapidly changing world.

The plan I am announcing today delivers on *The Promise of PC* in four strategic areas.

First, the plan aggressively promotes *The Promise of PC* by expanding our offerings to appeal to more students and faculty. We do so by enhancing the curricular, athletic, and co-curricular experiences for our existing and prospective students.

Second, the plan builds our ability to fulfill our promise by employing new initiatives to ensure student success.

Third, the plan invests in infrastructure – both in buildings and in people. – These are assets that are critical for students to realize *The Promise of PC* in and out of the classroom.

Finally, the plan describes how PC shares its promise with different audiences – potential students, alumni, and those who believe in the importance of the type of education we provide here.

Let's talk first about how we will expand *The Promise of PC* to appeal to talented students and faculty.

Since its founding, PC has offered academic programs that speak to the needs of the world and prepare its students to meet those needs. We continue in that promise by enhancing the core undergraduate experience through new programs that rely on the strengths of both existing faculty and new hires in different departments.

We are launching this year a new major and minor in Computational Biology – the use of biological data to improve diagnosis and treatment of different diseases. We are also establishing a new major and minor in Data Analytics – where students use statistical tools and machine learning techniques to solve real-world problems. Both these programs take the best parts of a PC education – capacities to analyze, to reason, to communicate, and the development of skills – and apply them in settings we could barely envision at the start of the 21st century. In both cases, we are adding strong faculty who will work with us to attract students to these new programs.

We are adding these programs even as we are committed to prudent management and assessment of our core experiences in the undergraduate curriculum. In doing so, our faculty will be leaders in developing new initiatives and in delivering on our educational goals in ways that we believe will consistently attract new students to campus.

Over seven years ago, PC extended its promise into post-graduate education by launching the School of Pharmacy. The plan we present today focuses on emerging needs in health professions in order to build on that new aspect of our mission.

In that spirit, we are excited to launch a Physician Assistant Studies program in August 2018. This master's-level program has over 500 applications for its first class of 28 students, and we have hired four new faculty members to train physician assistants in this growing marketplace.

We are also currently exploring additional graduate offerings, including Athletic Training and Occupational Therapy. While significant work remains for us to evaluate whether these programs are the right ones for PC to offer, **we believe developing new graduate offerings in health professions demonstrates PC's promise in health care fields where needs of under-served populations are critical and our emphasis on developing servant leaders stands out.**

As we develop graduate offerings, we will integrate those new programs and our Physician Assistant Studies curriculum with our successful efforts in Pharmacy, and next year we will create the School of Pharmacy and Health Professions.

In athletics, we are committed to providing *The Promise of PC* at the Division I level. We believe the Big South conference in particular is the right place for many of our PC student-athletes to thrive and to be competitive, and the Big South will be our home for most of our athletic programs for many years to come.

We also believe that we can expand PC's promise by offering new athletic opportunities to both current and potential students. We are building our cheer program to attract more students and to begin competing in different events. We are also starting new programs in wrestling for both men and women, as well as teams for acrobatics and tumbling. In each case, we expect that coaches for these sought-after and self-sustaining programs will work with their colleagues in the athletics department to recruit students to campus as soon as next year.

We are making another change in athletics outside the Big South as well: yesterday, I informed our football players and coaches that we are moving our Division I program over the next four years to the Pioneer Football League, with full competition beginning in 2021.

As this is a significant shift for PC athletics, let me make two points up front.

First, the move to the Pioneer League does not impact the scholarships of any current PC football player – period. All current players may remain on their existing athletic scholarships throughout their time on campus, provided they remain academically eligible.

Second, the only difference between the Pioneer League and the Big South is in the mix of scholarships provided. Our future football players will be eligible for the same kinds of academic scholarship and need-based aid that other PC students receive. Players enrolling in 2018 will not receive any athletic aid. For our current football student-athletes, they will be able to play football at PC, with their athletic scholarships,

for the next three years. I am proud of the dedication of coaches and our current football players as they begin this transition. I want each of them to be part of the PC family through their graduation, and I encourage all of us to support them as they consider their options. I sincerely hope each of us will encourage them to continue their PC careers, both athletically and academically.

We are making all of these moves in athletics to better position each of our new and existing programs to compete and succeed at the Division I level. We are also doing this to distribute our existing resources in a way that attracts more students to the campus as a whole, generating additional revenue to invest in the campus enterprise while carefully managing all of our resources.

The Promise of PC is not limited, however, to the classroom or playing field. We are expanding co-curricular activities that motivate students through experiences and memories that last a lifetime. We are moving into club sports in a new way for PC, with additions in bass fishing, archery, and tennis that provide avenues for current and prospective students to pursue their interests on and off campus. We are also highlighting new outdoor adventures that will similarly engage students. We see activities such as the Presbyterian College Model United Nations team as essential for student engagement. Finally, we are recognizing our global commitments by relaunching our China Scholars program, which provides scholarships for students to travel to our international partners at Guizhou University in Guiyang, China.

In each of these areas – curricular, athletic, and co-curricular – the plans we announce today will, in my judgment, both enhance the current student experience and attract new students to campus.

Once students are here, though, *The Promise of PC* means we will engage new programs to ensure their success on campus and to provide support structures and opportunities while here that leverage their success after graduation.

Over the last 18 months, our team has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan as part of our accreditation process. The plan, called *Life Beyond PC: Inquire, Decide, Engage, Achieve*, is a comprehensive effort to transform the student learning experience on campus by providing focused opportunities to develop problem-solving skills. Through first-year and second-year exploration courses, students will engage in problem-solving, consider their future plans, and explore the importance of vocation and career choices. Students will apply knowledge from their majors to develop a “signature work” on complex issues in their fields of study. From a cornerstone experience as a first-year student to a capstone experience as an anticipated graduate, students will gain value throughout their PC careers in identifying, analyzing, and managing complex problems. In its pilot stages now, *Life Beyond PC* will launch in August 2018 and work over the next five years to convey PC’s promise in creative ways.

We are also working to provide support structures for all students to assist them in realizing *The Promise of PC*.

- We are identifying and engaging first-generation students on campus that may require direct attention and discovery of success strategies.
- We have also launched tracking software to assist students and faculty in identifying issues on campus before they become obstacles to success and retention.
- In their second year, students will now receive individualized career check-ins and focused interviews.
- We are also currently studying models that promote increasing access to and participation in internships in the summer as well as during the traditional academic year.

Coupled with *Life Beyond PC*, I am confident each of these initiatives will encourage students to realize PC's promise, both before and after graduation.

In order to provide *The Promise of PC* to students in these new and innovative ways, we need to invest in our critical assets – our people and our physical spaces.

Over the next year, we will revamp our internal communications to share ideas and information across campus. Earlier this year, we named our first Director of Diversity and Inclusion on campus, and over the next year we are launching a Campus Climate Survey as well as increasing diversity initiatives such as events for students, faculty, and staff.

While these efforts to value our people are important, it is vital for us to work now to improve compensation and benefits for faculty and staff across campus. Although we need to ensure enrollment growth as part of our overall plan, our budgeting models are now designed to resume annual salary increases for faculty and staff beginning in the summer of 2018. The details for these enhancements will be determined by the leadership team before contracts and salary letters are issued for next year. We are also undertaking a review of benefits to ensure we have the right mix of cost-effective options for all our employees. I am convinced investing in our people is the right strategy. **Our faculty and staff are on the front lines for making *The Promise of PC* happen each and every day.**

In the past three years, you have seen our dedication to investing in the heart of campus: renovations to Georgia Hall, Springs Student Center, Greenville Dining Hall, Richardson Science Hall, and most noticeably Neville Hall have transformed spaces for living and learning, eating and working, and interacting with each other every day. We are updating our Facilities Master Plan to build on these achievements and

to provide even more opportunities to demonstrate *The Promise of PC* – in the classroom, in the student residences, and in the gathering spaces we need.

In the next three years, we plan to create new places for students to live, learn, study, and engage with each other and with faculty and staff. The PC you will see in 2020 will look quite different from what you see now – all with the intent to support *The Promise of PC*.

Our most exciting initiative regarding the physical space is to construct three new, apartment-style buildings with a total of 144 beds for our seniors near the heart of campus. We believe this is essential to maximizing the spirit of community we know embodies *The Promise of PC* for students, faculty, and staff. In adding these residential facilities, we will also transform Springs Student Center by offering more space for recreation, meetings, and events, and we will be developing new individual and group study spaces throughout the heart of campus. We will be repurposing some facilities and relocating offices in others to provide a more seamless campus life experience, and we are configuring residence halls to offer more opportunities for single facilities.

While our Facilities Master Plan will not be finalized until early next year, we are excited about the potential these options give us for future growth and expansion across both undergraduate and graduate programs.

I believe *The Promise of PC* is essential in today's higher education marketplace, and it is vital that we share that promise in ways that engage different individuals and groups and excite them about what PC has to offer.

We will do so through invigorating our website to highlight *The Promise of PC* to external audiences. We are developing profiles of the best examples of that promise – students, faculty, and staff – to highlight with news stories, videos, social media posts, and other communications channels. We are expanding capacity in marketing and communications, and we are coordinating this work in order to recruit new students, reach out to alumni, and reconnect with friends and those who wonder why they may not have heard about *The Promise of PC* before.

We are also connecting with people who want to help us realize *The Promise of PC* for the next generation of students. We are continuing our foundational relationships with the Presbyterian Church, USA, and our covenant partnership with the Synod of the South Atlantic is something we are confident will always be a source of strength and support for PC. We plan to hold meetings across the Southeast over the next several months to share how alumni and friends may share PC's promise within their individual and group networks. We are also studying how to implement a capital campaign that expands *The Promise of PC* throughout all our initiatives.

While *The Promise of PC* is rooted in our mission and grounded in our commitment to students, what I am announcing today is the result of 18 months of work by students, faculty, and staff: through meetings on campus, focus groups, theme teams, feedback sessions, and outreach to individuals and groups, over 500 members of the PC family came together to craft an outstanding plan to engage PC's promise for a new generation on campus. I am grateful to them for their hard work and to the Board of Trustees for its unanimous support of this plan.

I hope you sense that we have many initiatives underway, but as in any plan there may be modifications we make over time to best realize our vision for *The Promise of PC* in the future. In whatever we do, though, I am committed to ensuring that we deliver on our promise to our students just as we have since 1880, for I believe *The Promise of PC* is what sets us apart in the realm of higher education and what makes us more relevant than ever in 2017 and beyond.

These are challenging times for higher education, for liberal arts colleges and for PC. Throughout our history, we have changed in significant ways along the path to becoming the institution we love. I believe this plan positions PC for success academically, athletically and financially for decades to come.

With any comprehensive plan, I know there will be questions, and I am looking forward to answering those with you later this month. We are planning faculty and staff forums. We will answer as many of your questions as time permits during the sessions, and I look forward to our conversations going forward.

I hope that you share my excitement now for what we have in store, and in that vein let me answer one question now I hope many of you have today: How may I help realize *The Promise of PC* starting today? My answer is this: I encourage faculty and staff to continue to provide the educational opportunities we know make a difference each and every day and to inspire all of our students to be excited about how what we have in store enhances their experiences. Students, I want you to do your best as the end of the semester arrives and papers and exams approach, and we want you to experience *The Promise of PC* throughout your time on campus.

As we move forward together, ensuring the success of *The Promise of PC* rests in our hands. I am convinced that, if each of us embraces and contributes to the tremendous potential of what we have to offer in the years to come, *The Promise of PC* will continue to set us apart as we offer a distinctive experience for all of our students.

Thank you for the chance today to share *The Promise of PC* with each of you, and I hope all of you have a wonderful Thanksgiving break later this week. We have much to be thankful for on campus, and much has been accomplished. Our work to realize these plans, however, is just beginning. I hope, then, that each of

us comes back from a wonderful Thanksgiving, rested and ready work together and put our time, energy and talents into delivering *The Promise of PC*.