

Connecting with the

DEFIANCE COMMUNITY

President Gordon's reach extended beyond the campus in his interactions with DC alumni and friends of the College and with members of the community.

Defiance Mayor Robert Armstrong described "a great working relationship" with the College, having partnered with President Gordon on several projects – from providing an outdoor ice skating rink for DC students and the community to facilitating the transfer of the former Defiance County Senior Center from the city to DC.

"President Gordon will be missed," Armstrong said. "His interest in promoting the City of Defiance was evident during his tenure at Defiance College, and for this, we are very grateful."

The College shares an affiliation with the United Church of Christ, and St. John's congregation serves as the local church for the campus. Its pastor Rev. Bob Jencks became well-acquainted with President Gordon since arriving two-and-a-half years ago. They met periodically, often for lunch. In addition, Pastor Jencks invited President Gordon to join a group of Christian clergy for a theological discussion group, which President Gordon did on a regular basis.

Said Pastor Jencks, "One of the things that became clear to me in the midst of our luncheon conversations is his commitment to the students of the College. He enjoys spending time with them. That impresses me."

When President Gordon arrived in Defiance, the College had already instituted a plan to reintroduce the arts. One of the initiatives under way was the Defiance College Community Band directed by Dr. Vincent Polce. Dr. Polce passed away in 2011, but the DCCB continues and its concerts remain popular and well-attended.

Dr. Polce's wife, Donna, has become involved with the College and has appreciated the leadership President Gordon provided. "The excellent work and tireless efforts of Mark Gordon during his tenure as President of Defiance College warrant mention. ... As director of the DCCB, Vince loved working under the presidency of Mark Gordon. President Gordon always attended his concerts, showing support and appreciation to him personally. They had a lot of respect for each other's efforts. Both had a vision of making the world a better place by inspiring students to do their best."

The McMaster School for Advancing Humanity, created by Helen and the late Harold McMaster, celebrated its tenth anniversary in the midst of President Gordon's tenure. He demonstrated his commitment to the School first-hand by

participating for a year in the Belize learning community and taking part in two exploratory trips, first to Tanzania and most recently to Panama and Nicaragua.

Helen McMaster lauded President Gordon, saying "I think he did a wonderful job. He's really helped the College and certainly helped the McMaster projects too. I think he understands it. He's a very efficient man."

Former Board of Trustees chairman Zac Isaac noted that the McMaster program provides a unique experience for Defiance College students that is not available at most peer colleges. "Mark has done an outstanding job developing the McMaster School into a world-class experience for Defiance College students and faculty," he said.

President Gordon left his mark with Defiance alumni, from those who walked across the stage to receive their diploma from him, to those who met him during an alumni reunion or reception.

Matt Coons graduated in 2014, and he recalled that he frequently met President Gordon on campus. "He would stop and ask how my classes were coming along, and if I was still enjoying my major. He took a genuine interest in each and every student."

Other 2014 graduates, Jordan Heiliger and Adam Grillot, shared similar remembrances.

"It is obvious that President Gordon loves traveling with students, and seeing how they grow through the experience," said Jordan. "I had the opportunity to travel with him to





Dignitaries including George Smart '67 and President Gordon cut the ribbon on the new George M. Smart Athletic Center in 2011.

Tanzania, and it was fun to watch him attempt Swahili in order to break the ice in each village. He once told me that you have to be willing to make mistakes in order to help break down those cultural barriers, and that advice has stuck with me throughout my career.”

Adam recalled how President Gordon reached out and helped him following the death of his father. “He has assisted in my individual development, professional career outlook and networking, and provided inspiring perspectives that I hope I can pass on to others.

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Bryant Green, class of 2012, was a sophomore when President Gordon came to Defiance. “From the moment he arrived on campus, it was obvious that his objective was to provide the most practical, well-rounded, diverse and unique academic experience for every student,” Bryant said. “President Gordon had the foresight to understand that with the nationwide phenomenon that is the commodification of education, Defiance must evolve so that its students may be competitive in a dynamic and ever-changing job market.”

Tracy Smith, class of 1994, said of President Gordon: “The campus has been physically improved, and the quality of people working at DC is great. As a former student-athlete at DC, I saw many students come and go, but I didn’t see the quality of those people that I see now when I return to campus.”

Alumna Jan Craig, class of 1969, said she first encountered President Gordon’s “irrepressible enthusiasm for Defiance College” at an alumni board meeting. Echoing previous sentiments, she said, “It was clear to me from the outset that he had bold plans to stimulate growth and introduce new programs as well as supporting and furthering ones in planning or in place, to help build on the timely educational opportunities for DC students and develop their integration skills with the rest of the world.”

She said, “I’ve never been prouder to be a DC alum than in these past few years. Many outstanding individuals have kept DC alive and made her what she is today. In my opinion, Mark Gordon takes his place among them.”

Alumnus and TKE Terry Haydinger returns to campus frequently for homecoming and reunions, and has taken note of not only the physical campus but how President Gordon managed his presidency, calling him “always visible, always enthusiastic, always helpful.” He said the College is better today than when President Gordon first arrived. As a TKE, Haydinger



said he will miss the President's "pep talk" at their reunion dinners.

Bill and Linda Bonham, class of 1969, consider Defiance College fortunate to have President Gordon's leadership. They recalled the influence of individuals like Gerry Mallott and Dr. Dosia Carlson, and said that President Gordon "reignited the passion and commitment of the alumni," as well as influencing the student body, parents and community at-large. Describing his accomplishments as planted seeds that will bring forth fruit years from now, "those of us who are still around will say Mark Gordon and his family are responsible for they first challenged us to a higher level of education, commitment and dedication," they wrote.

Professor Emeritus Randy Buchman touched decades of students-turned-alumni through his years as a faculty member, coach and development professional. "As one who has served under six of our 18 presidents, I feel Mark Gordon has left his mark on DC," he said. "His inexhaustible energy and enthusiasm in his tasks will long be remembered. His deep compassion for the students of DC has enhanced the variety of extracurricular activities to supplement the DC experience, i.e., lacrosse, swimming, marching band, and most of all, the expansion of domestic and international travel."

"The completion of DC's largest capital campaign was achieved under his leadership. His six years with DC have made an impact, and I wish him well as he starts his new endeavors."

Students visiting the President's house always received a warm welcome from President Gordon, his wife, Anne, and Foxy the poodle. Below, President Gordon with the men's basketball team on a service trip to Jamaica in 2011.

