

President Mark C. Gordon recently stepped down as Defiance College's 18th president to accept a position as President and Dean at William Mitchell College of Law in Minnesota.

“I have absolutely adored my time as president at Defiance College,” said President Gordon, “and it was a very difficult decision for me to even contemplate taking another position. However, the two jobs I have loved most in my career have been president and dean. This enables me to be both at the same time, and there are fewer than two dozen such positions in the country, so you can imagine how intrigued I was when I was recruited for this opportunity. In addition, the proposed merger of Mitchell with Hamline University School of Law gives me a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to work with faculty, staff, and students to create a new law school: Mitchell Hamline School of Law.

“I could not be prouder of all that we have accomplished working together at Defiance College since I started as president in 2009. I want to publicly thank the trustees, faculty, coaches, staff, students, and alumni all of whom are so committed to this wonderful college and who played such an important role in the progress of these past six years. I will also always appreciate the warm welcome that the entire Defiance community has given me and my family.”

Edd Buhl, Chairman of the college's Board of Trustees, said, “On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the entire Defiance College community, I want to thank Mark Gordon for his dedication, commitment, and hard work on behalf of DC. Mark's many accomplishments are a testament to the tremendous service he has provided to Defiance. Thanks to his creative and visionary leadership, we are now a stronger and better college with an even brighter future.”

President Gordon stated that he has led the College during a period of significant change and progress, including achievements such as the construction of the George M. Smart Athletic Center; the reintroduction and growth

of the Music program; the creation of Project 701 (a separately legally-incorporated student-run non-profit); successful completion of the \$26 million capital campaign for the College; the introduction of the Imagine Initiatives to give students international and domestic travel opportunities; starting the DC lacrosse, swimming, wrestling, and marching band programs; the development and introduction of a new Core Curriculum; the creation of the Defiance College Partnership for Jobs; numerous infrastructure improvements (including installation of Smart Boards and new technology in the classrooms, renovations to McReynolds Hall, turf, new bleachers in the Weaner Center, redone Dix tennis courts, energy efficiency investments, etc.); increased diversity on campus; creation of numerous hands-on experiences to link the classroom and the real world (such as the Cold Case Initiative, the Business Advantage program, enhanced collaboration with Defiance City Schools, etc.); significant expansion in support services for students (including tutoring, counseling, bridge program, peer mentoring, etc.); creation of the new ASD Affinity Program for college students with autism, and much more.

During President Gordon's tenure, the College has also improved its financial position, decreasing its long-term outstanding debt by more than 30 percent while significantly increasing the number of students attracted to DC from all around the country. President Gordon has also been known for his close mentoring relationships with students and for welcoming students to the President's House for study tables, movie nights, dinners, ice cream, and ping-pong games.

Wayne Kelly, a junior from Fort Wayne, Ind., said President Gordon treated him like family since the first time they met. “We probably talk one or more times a week. I usually go over to his house every week just to talk with him and his family,” said the business administration major. “He is one of the most engaged people I've ever been around. He truly cares. If I bring up something at his house, he will remember and ask me about it the next time I see him.”

“I could not be prouder of all that we have accomplished working together at Defiance College since I started as president in 2009.”

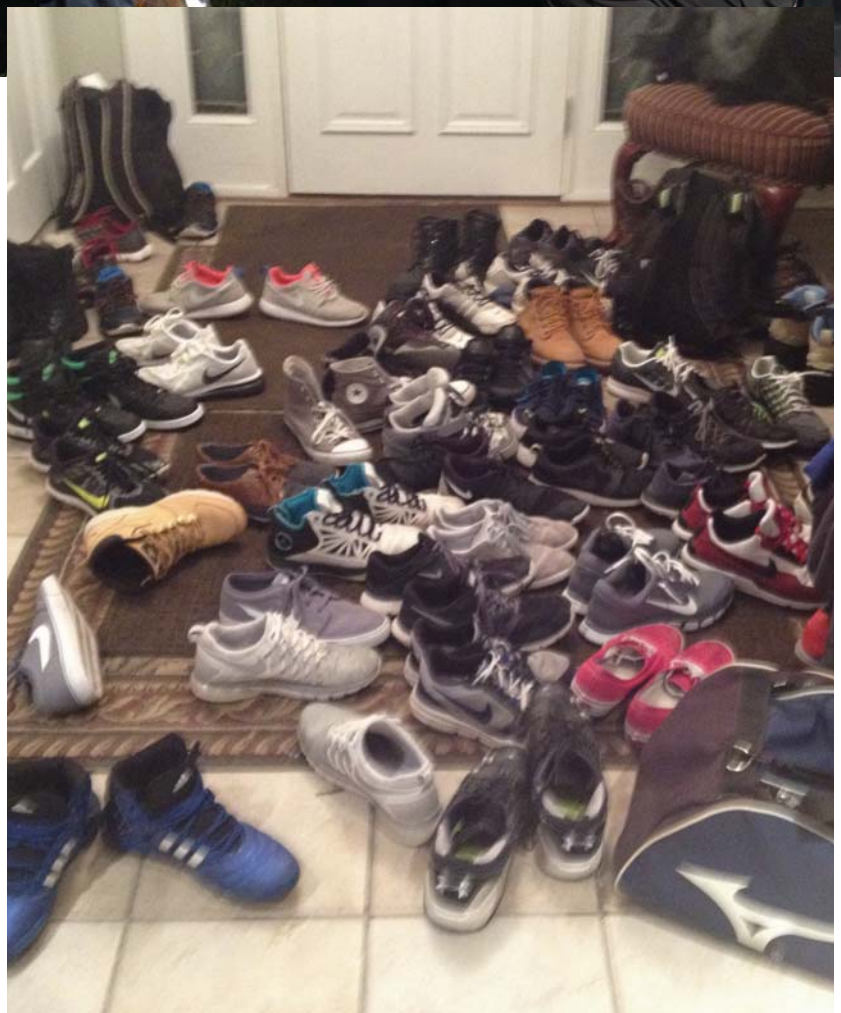


Junior Mariah Brown from Paxton, Ill., said President Gordon helped her through some difficult times in college and gave her a home away from home. “Every time I went over to his house, he helped me move one step closer to graduating, whether it was through study tables he invited me to, or providing someone I was able to go to whenever I needed anything.”

Students relate that President Gordon often played a role in easing parents’ concerns about college and made their transition to campus life much easier. Two students from Jamaica, Toni-Ann Boyd and Melissa Russell, recalled that he made an impact on their parents. “My mom loved that he seemed so normal, and she could be secure in letting me go to another country to study. He reassured her,” said Toni-Ann.

Melissa recalled meeting President Gordon as he was on a service trip to her country. “I met him wearing tennis shoes and a t-shirt; he had been working at a local school. We sat there and talked and asked questions, and I felt comfortable. He said, ‘We need you at Defiance.’ ... He’s been one of those people who made me feel that he wanted me here at Defiance. He told my mom, ‘I’m going to take good care of your daughter.’ She’s always appreciated that.”

Alexis Walker, a sophomore from Fort Myers, Fla., said her parents shared a similar sentiment, feeling their daughter would be in good hands. “I’ll never forget, the day after Christmas break last year we were snowed in.



A not-uncommon sight at the President’s home – students’ shoes in the entry hall when visiting for study tables, dinners, movie nights or playing ping pong.



I heard a knock at my door, and President Gordon was standing there with a plate of cookies. He stopped by students' doors with cookies. That was pretty awesome."

Alexis, like many other students, became better acquainted with the President while on College-sponsored trips. Sophomore Kenny Miller had the opportunity to go on a recent McMaster School exploratory trip to Panama and Nicaragua. "While on this trip, I had the chance to really get to know President Gordon. We both learned about each other's backgrounds, and we learned quite a bit about each other's morals and ethics.

"I found out that Defiance was lucky enough to have a president who really cared about the students, their families, and he genuinely cared about each student's success as if they were his own children."

Freshman Sonya Slone took part in a New York City trip led by President Gordon. She recalled that she didn't have enough money to eat lunch, so he took her to Subway where they ate and talked. "When my aunt was sick, I was pretty down, and I went to him, and he gave me words of encouragement," she said. "I'll always appreciate his guidance. He's had a big impact on me. It makes a better college environment when the president is more involved with students."

The Gordons have always had an open door for students to the President's home during their six years in Defiance. "We have always met at least once a week since my freshman year," said sophomore John Seeley. "We just kicked back and talked about what's going on in life and how to handle certain situations."

"With all my visits there, he has offered me some great advice about things that have occurred in my life," said sophomore Zach Kasper. "All in all, he is just a very caring person who wants not only me, but all DC students, to perform at the best of their ability."

"As cliché as it may sound, for the last four years of my life President Gordon has been there for me in the worst of times and in the best of times. I can remember struggling with the death of a friend in my freshman year, and in that dark moment President Gordon was there with two bowls of high quality ice cream. On the other hand, just earlier this week when I found out that I'd been accepted to Harvard Divinity School, it was President Gordon who took me to Cold Stone and also bought me congratulatory ice cream cake that we shared as we discussed the incredible blessing that I had received. Over the years President Gordon has been an adviser, a mentor, a teacher, and eventually it has become clear that he has also been a friend. Nothing testifies to this truth better than the fact that as we both move away from Defiance College, we will remain in touch and continue the hundreds of conversations we've had on an incredibly wide array of topics from God to preference of music. President Gordon has helped to challenge me and provoke me to grow and has been an integral part of my college experience at Defiance."

PHILIP BALLA '15