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Alvernia College Strategic Plan

March 22, 2007

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Preface

The Strategic Planning Council was commissioned by President Thomas Flynn to chart a course for the future of Alvernia College and develop a long-term vision and a set of priorities and goals for the next decade.

To do this, Dr. Flynn charged the Council to engage the Alvernia community in the creation of its visions—faculty, staff, students, alumni, and trustees—as well as the communities of Reading and the region. The Council met regularly throughout 2006 and 2007 to discuss and develop the plan, and researched and prepared analyses of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the major areas of Academics, Enrollment, Institutional Advancement, College Life, Community Engagement, and the Physical Campus.

During this process, the Council consulted with a broad range of Alvernia communities and constituencies including the Board, students, faculty, and staff. It consulted with Performa, Inc, the campus master planners, to ensure that the master plan and the strategic plan were carefully integrated. The Council released several drafts of the plan to the larger campus community for general comment and consultation. The final plan is offered to the President and the Board of Trustees of Alvernia College for their endorsement and approval.

Strategic Planning Council

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Introduction

Higher education has become an increasingly competitive business in the past two decades. The top schools have increasingly become national institutions, drawing students from all fifty states, and pursuing the best of those learners with aggressive financial aid packages and other inducements. The delivery of higher education has been deeply influenced by the internet, with online institutions delivering effective content at low prices. The vast majority of schools, who fit into neither category, face numerous challenges, including the need to meet the rising stringencies of accreditation bodies, the shrinking amount of federal aid available to students, and the looming demographic peak and then slide in the size of college-age student body in 2009 and after. In addition, college students are increasingly no longer primarily traditional-aged 18-22 year olds. More and more, they are older adults returning to school to complete a first degree, earn a graduate degree, or get a specialized certificate, learning in a classroom or online. The result of this shifting situation is that colleges and universities must react quickly and effectively to their environment. It is no longer possible to be complacent.

Alvernia has something of an advantage in this regard. The College has, over the last decade, developed programs and services that break outside the box of traditional instructional methods. While building quality in its traditional undergraduate population, Alvernia has also aggressively created innovative and entrepreneurial undergraduate and graduate programs. The College has grown in size, physically and in the number of faculty and students. It has opened branch campuses to serve populations as close as the Schuylkill County and as far away as Philadelphia. That development has come at a rapid pace, enough that the previous ten year comprehensive plan was accomplished well ahead of schedule. The College has built upon its traditional strengths and established new ones. Our new strategic plan is a way of continuing that progress into the next decade, a decade that includes the fiftieth anniversary of Alvernia's founding.

The basic form of the College is clear. Alvernia is an institution that offers reasonably priced education in a range of arts and sciences, professional, undergraduate, and graduate programs; an education that is not simply one of acquiring knowledge, but couching that knowledge in a moral and civic context. Alvernia stresses engagement at every level: spiritual, ethical, creative, and intellectual. The College seeks to educate good citizens of Berks County, of the United States, and of the world. To make manifest that outline, the College will need to develop continuing competitive advantages in educational areas both tactical and strategic, and solidly grounded in the Mission and Vision of the school.

Guiding Principles

The plan uses a number of overarching principles to inform the plan. The principles are grounded in Alvernia's heritage, mission and vision, and serve as an unchanging foundation for the particular priorities.

1. **Franciscan Identity and Bernardine Collaboration.** The strategic plan must always recognize Alvernia's identity and heritage as a Franciscan Catholic institution and the continued commitment to collaborate with the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters.

2. **Operational Imperatives.** There are a number of operating principles to which the College must adhere to execute the strategic plan effectively. These are a careful attention to **fiscal soundness**, a dedication to **organizational efficiency and integration**, prudent and ongoing **investment in technology infrastructure**, and an awareness that the strategic plan has substantial **facilities implications**.

In addition, the strategic plan must recognize the **broad range of Alvernia's offerings**, including programs that range from the fine and creative arts to the professional, from the undergraduate to the graduate, from traditional age to mature students.

3. **Diversity.** Alvernia must be sure to put all its strategic priorities into action with a strong attention to diversity: the diversity of background, including student, staff, and faculty, and the diversity of experience, including service, service-learning, and exposure to other cultures and belief systems.

Internal and External Scan

The number of students in traditional day programs across the country have been growing. This will continue until 2008 when there will be a 17% increase in the number of traditional-age students entering higher education from 2004. From 2008, however, the traditional age population will start to decrease, across the nation and in Pennsylvania. The number of new Pennsylvania high school graduates in 2004 was approximately 139,385; the estimated number of high school graduates in 2011-12 will go down to 132,547. While the decline is not precipitous, Alvernia must position itself to continue to capture its share of students when the available population begins to decline.

Traditional-age students want to develop skills that will help make their working lives less stressful and increase their marketability. They want to learn "people skills," and they want to make money. Traditional-age students are interested in performing/fine arts as an avocation, have had extracurricular experiences, and want to continue to enrich those experiences during their college years. A majority of students entering college today go to school close to home, and 80 percent of students going to private colleges expect to live in the residence hall their first year. In addition to being highly mobile, and despite the fact that a majority end up attending a college within 50 miles of home, students express a willingness to travel further distances to attend the college of their choice.

On the graduate and continuing studies side, the pool of potential students is also increasing, though not as predictably as for the traditional-aged population. At the present time, students interested in graduate and continuing studies make decisions based on reputation, course schedules and convenient locations. Flexible course schedules, including Saturday and modular classes, present students with the most choices and diversity in their educational programs, especially if those programs are at a range of locations.

While Alvernia is currently well-positioned, a number of challenges threaten its future, including a lack of clarity of institutional vision and mission, competition for students and qualified faculty from peer institutions, fragmentation of programs drawing disproportionate resources, disjointed integration of institutional advancement goals and strategic planning, and a lack of consistency to engage the community beyond the campus. The Strategic Plan presented here is designed to address these emerging opportunities and threats.

Institutional Heritage

True to its Franciscan heritage and mission motto: **To Learn, To Love, To Serve**, Alvernia's Franciscan values have shaped its character and history since its founding. Service, humility, collegiality, contemplation, and peacemaking are institutional core values woven through the academic, co-curricular, and spiritual culture of Alvernia. Francis of Assisi, an agent of spiritual change in the Middle Ages, gave to the three Franciscan Orders and all humanity a legacy that is timeless and universal. To be Franciscan is to respect the dignity of each human person and all creation; to be open to the world and its diversity of cultures, faiths, traditions, races, and peoples; to honor right relationships; and to seek peace through action for justice. Although a young institution, Alvernia anticipates its 50th Anniversary in 2008 with great enthusiasm, embracing a rich and vibrant Franciscan heritage that is truly relevant today, rich with promise for tomorrow, and welcoming to all.

MISSION

Guided by Franciscan values and the ideal of “knowledge joined with love,” and rooted in the Catholic and liberal arts traditions, Alvernia is a rigorous, caring, and inclusive learning community committed to academic excellence and to being and fostering **broadly educated, life-long learners; reflective professionals and engaged citizens; and ethical leaders with moral courage.**

To Learn, To Love, To Serve

VISION

To Be A Distinctive Franciscan University, Committed to Personal and Social Transformation, Through Integrated, Community-Based, Inclusive, and Ethical Learning

Integrated Learning — combining liberal arts and professional education, and blending rigorous inquiry, practical experience and personal reflection in the classroom, on campus, and in society;

Community – Based Learning — engaging the local, regional and global communities as partners in education and service;

Inclusive Learning — welcoming people of diverse beliefs and backgrounds; responsive to the educational needs of recent high school graduates, working adults and established professionals, and senior citizens; respectful and self-critical in our dialogue about differences in values and perspectives;

Ethical Learning — challenging individuals to be values-based leaders by developing habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of the soul.

Strategic Priorities

The Council has identified five strategic priorities to guide Alvernia's continued improvement and development over the next ten years. They are:

Identity

Educational Quality

Student Communities

Community and External Engagement

Resource Development

Identity

Alvernia commits itself to becoming a distinctive Franciscan University

Alvernia's identity derives deeply from the heritage and the mission of the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters, founders and sponsors of the college. The intellectual vision of the early Franciscan theologians like St. Bonaventure valued "knowledge joined with love," and inspired the tradition of service, most particularly for those with the greatest needs. The missionary spirit of the Bernardine Franciscan sisters who came from Europe to serve the immigrant populations in the U.S. continues to inform and encourage the work of their lay successors throughout the world.

Alvernia has built a strong and enduring foundation upon this Catholic, Franciscan, and Bernardine heritage. The College is distinctive in the broad range of programs it offers and aims to offer, from the undergraduate to the graduate and continuing education, from the main campus to satellite sites, from the arts and sciences to the professional programs, from the traditional-aged to the Senior's College. The College links training in that wide range of practical subjects to the experience of a common civic and intellectual, moral, philosophical, and spiritual core that prepares students to be citizens of their region, their country, and their globe. Alvernia aims for practical, spiritual, and moral intellects who contribute to and serve their communities with grace and charity. We must build on this strength, by ensuring that we educate the whole person and work to develop the mind, body, heart, and spirit of our students.

Alvernia's rapid evolution makes essential several critical initiatives to cement Alvernia's position as a distinctive Franciscan institution of higher learning. First, the College must expand its geographic scope to parallel its growth as an institution. Focused on the Greater Reading area since its birth, the College now needs to now broaden that gaze to the Mid-Atlantic Region. This will enable it to draw the students and make the community connections necessary to sustain and develop all of its broad range of programs. Second, Alvernia needs to be sure that its heritage, mission, and identity are clearly understood within the institution and without. That heritage, mission, and vision is an enormously powerful driving force for the College; our continuing development demands clarity. Especially critical will be emphasizing the Franciscan intellectual and artistic traditions, the Franciscan commitment to service, and the Franciscan belief in

environmental sustainability. Finally, Alvernia must change its name from Alvernia College to Alvernia University. The combination of the broad range of offerings and venues characteristic of a university combined with the continuation of Alvernia's shared Franciscan values and personalized attention will make the institution truly distinctive.

Key Goals

- **To expand the geographic scope of student and program markets and engagement of alumni, parents, and friends, especially in the Mid-Atlantic Region.**
- **To communicate Alvernia's distinctive Franciscan identity both internally and externally.**
- **To enhance Alvernia's identity as a comprehensive institution by seeking a change in name and status to university.**

Educational Quality

Alvernia commits itself to creating and sustaining excellent academic programs driven by an outstanding faculty.

Alvernia College has undergone significant change in its 48-year history. These changes reflect the educational enterprise's maturation from its original mission of training Bernardine sisters to be teachers to an institution that offers more than 30 majors and programs to a wide variety of students, including undergraduate, graduate, post-graduate, and community members, at both main and satellite campuses.

The College's goal as an institution of higher learning is to give students, both graduate and undergraduate, an educational experience that is comprehensive and integrated and that prepares students for lives in the global community. An Alvernia education extends across the spectrum of curriculum, co-curricular activities, social interactions, and intellectual events. The education strives to be both supportive and rigorous, and one that emphasizes diversity in all its forms. The quest for an integrated educational experience emphasizes the development of strong and defined disciplines as the fundamental constituents of Alvernia's academic program. Allied to that is a powerful commitment to interdisciplinary courses and programs that blend the strengths of the individual disciplines into sophisticated courses of study and challenge students to be ethical leaders.

Alvernia can improve educational quality by emphasizing a number of signatures. These will be of high quality and high visibility, developed out of both new and existing programs. Some will be resource intensive and some will be economical. As a whole, they will signify the diverse range of Alvernia's offerings and represent the entire college, professional and arts & sciences programs, undergraduate and graduate curricula. Potential examples might be in Ethics and Leadership, Community-based Learning, and Pre-Professional Programs. Each signature will be academic in nature, and distinguish Alvernia to students, parents, the community, and accrediting bodies. They will have a

readily understood value, reflect Alvernia's identity, be marketable, and have a rippling effect throughout the college. Alvernia must also target specific disciplinary programs in all of its divisions to ensure continued academic improvement, especially those that have been underdeveloped like the fine and creative arts.

Alvernia will continue to build and strengthen its student body. The College will carefully define what it means to be a quality Alvernia student and tailor its recruitment efforts to suit that definition. This definition will incorporate not only test scores and other traditional measures of student quality, but also attributes that reflect the College's heritage, history, and location. In addition, Alvernia will give careful consideration to the student experience at the institution, by paying close attention to retention and graduation rates and other measures of student achievement. An Alvernia education, through classroom experiences, collaborative work, advising, and the entire educational array, must offer enduring value. The result will be a student body ready to be challenged and stimulated by the institution, a student body ready to challenge and stimulate the institution in return.

Central to the academic experience are Alvernia's community of engaged and proficient faculty. The College relies on them to teach, mentor and guide students through their academic journey, whether at the undergraduate, master's, or doctoral level. Academic faculty remains one of the few groups in society whose responsibility is to explore, create, and pass on knowledge without partisanship or bias, and regardless of pressure or favor. Such responsibilities demand "teacher-scholars" who combine excellence in teaching with excellence in scholarship and bring the two together for the benefit of their students and the community.

Alvernia thus must continue to strengthen and build its faculty community by recruiting and retaining such teacher-scholars. Moreover, improving the community of faculty requires resources and recognition for faculty teaching, service, and all forms of scholarly activity. The commitment of such resources to Alvernia's faculty must be accompanied by a consistent level of rigor in teaching and scholarship through the creation of individual and institution-wide developmental and evaluative standards for teaching, scholarship, and service that compare favorably to Alvernia's peer institutions.

Key Goals:

- **To improve program quality by creating interdisciplinary signatures and targeting resources to specific undergraduate and graduate programs, including underdeveloped ones such as the fine and creative arts.**
- **To prepare all students for lives in the global community by stressing an integrated learning experience through general education, capstones, and participation in learning communities.**
- **To improve the community of faculty through a systematic plan of effective recruitment, support, and evaluation that ensures the continuing development of excellent "teacher-scholars."**
- **To bolster student achievement by improving the entering student profile and by improving the demonstrated outcomes of the Alvernia education.**

Student Communities

Alvernia commits itself to enhance the learning experience for all students by strengthening and expanding the residential and educational environments.

The education that students receive during their college career happens not only in the classroom, but also during a wide range of encounters, whether academic, athletic, recreational, social, or cultural. A particularly important encounter has long been the experience of living and learning on campus. Becoming integrated into a tightly knit community of learning and socialization, consisting of faculty and students alike, encourages both intellectual and civic maturity.

Currently, Alvernia's residential experience is relatively small compared to its peer institutions. That puts the College at a disadvantage with those peers in competing for the large majority of students who wish to live away from home and have a "total college experience." At the moment, the College has neither the space nor the on-campus services, staff, and activities to compete effectively with schools with larger residential bodies. A substantial residential population, largely undergraduate but with some graduate students, combined with the services and activities to match will make Alvernia more competitive in the larger market. Alvernia's residential community will thus be carefully enlarged along with the services needed to support that community. The College will aim to create not just capacity for residents but strive to build a diverse and inclusive community of students on campus.

At the same time, the College must recognize that it has strong non-residential communities. Composed of commuter, graduate, continuing education, and off-site students, these communities are growing in solidity and self-identity. We will continue to emphasize those groups by structuring on- and off-campus services in a way that supports them as well.

In fact, Alvernia's student services and staff will be the linking point between the residential body and other student groups. Alvernia will aim for a true residential experience for its entire student body. Activities will range from athletic, to cultural, to social, to intellectual, and will promote interaction between the co-curriculum and the curriculum.

This will require facilities that support the entire range of curricular, co-curricular, and social and cultural activities. Especially critical are well-developed learning environments with a consistent level of technology, usability, and access. Alvernia will also improve learning spaces, including formal areas where teachers and students can gather together to explore and discover, and more informal areas where students can study and learn independently. Such learning commons are critical to ensure that the learning experience extends seamlessly across campus, from library to student center to residence hall, within classrooms and without, in the physical and virtual world alike. Social and cultural spaces are also essential, especially for indoor and outdoor recreation and athletics.

In sum, Alvernia commits itself to strengthening its student communities, undergraduate

and graduate, residential and commuter, and full-time and continuing education. Each community will receive the focused attention it needs to flourish. The emphasis for every community will be healthy intellectual, spiritual, and physical development of all students.

Key Goals:

- **To develop a co-curriculum that includes enhanced programming in the arts, recreation and athletics, social and cultural experiences, contemporary and ethical issues, and leadership opportunities.**
- **To create a state of the art teaching, learning, and living environment through improved facilities and services.**
- **To expand in stages the residential community by increasing significantly the size and variety of living options, to a preferred capacity of 800 students after five years and 1000 students within 10 years.**

Community and External Engagement

Alvernia commits to expanding external engagement, especially with alumni, civic leaders, and learning partners, and to strengthening its visibility and reputation.

Alvernia is centered within Berks County. Most of the College's students are drawn from within that county or the counties bordering it, and the College is well known within that area. Our alumni live largely within the three-county area, and most of the College's fundraising takes place there. Alvernia's growth into the Mid-Atlantic Region demands a renewed effort to engage with the College's traditional communities more fully through alumni programs, by creating opportunities for students and alumni to connect, and by ensuring that the connections between Enrollment Management, Institutional Advancement, Community Engagement, and alumni are strong. As the College grows in regional focus, it must ensure that its foundational relationships remain solid.

Within Berks County, Alvernia has long had a strong community presence. This will continue. Berks and the surrounding counties will be, for the foreseeable future, the geographical foundation of Alvernia, and the College must scrupulously tend to that foundation. This involves more than merely drawing students. Alvernia's educational mission emphasizes practical application, community involvement, and service learning. The College, as both an institutional responsibility and educational imperative, sees engagement with its community as absolutely critical, whether it be through experiential learning opportunities, strong alliances with local and regional partners, or by establishing the Alvernia Campus as a community destination for events, activities, and programs.

Finally, Alvernia must work strongly to market itself and its strengths as a distinctive Franciscan University. This demands the development of an integrated marketing plan that spans both local and regional markets, that promotes undergraduate and graduate

programs, and that emphasizes Alvernia's blend of curricular and co-curricular programs and offerings.

Key Goals:

- **To engage the alumni through special programming and expanded opportunities to connect with their *alma mater*.**
- **To establish Alvernia as a leader in community-based learning and civic engagement through the Center for Community Engagement and the Center for Ethics and Leadership.**
- **To build Alvernia's institutional reputation by developing an integrated marketing program.**

Resource Development

Alvernia commits to pursuing new and expanded opportunities for resource development to enhance both educational quality and long-term fiscal strength.

The College must work to ensure that its efforts are supported by a position of continuing financial strength, in both its current and its long-term financial positions. The College has a relatively small endowment. To solidify the Alvernia's current financial position, the College must carefully steward current resources through a range of sustainability initiatives. In addition, Alvernia's enrollment has to grow along with the institution. This growth, however, must come in a sustained and systematic way through the development of short- and long-term undergraduate and graduate recruitment and retention goals. The institution should also look to secure its fiscal future. To do so, Alvernia has to seek out new revenue sources. These sources could come from a range of initiatives, including grant development and non-credit programs. Most importantly, Alvernia should work to develop and sustain a comprehensive fundraising campaign, to help underwrite the costs of the strategic and master plans and to build the endowment. Finally, the College must put into action its Franciscan ideals of stewardship by working towards environmental sustainability in order to be a good global steward as well as a good local one. Alvernia trains its students to be ethical leaders in their communities; the College can do no less.

Key Goals

- **To enhance current fiscal strength through steady, targeted enrollment growth.**
- **To strive to become an environmentally sustainable college community and campus by putting into practice Franciscan ideals in campus operations.**
- **To secure Alvernia's fiscal future by developing new sources of revenue and through a comprehensive fundraising program, including an initial "Anniversary campaign," and ongoing efforts.**

Recommendations for Monitoring

The Council believes that it is absolutely critical to evaluate the progress of this plan. Such assessment is vital not only to measure the progress towards the full implementation of the priorities but also to ensure that the strategic plan and the campus master plan remain effectively linked. The Council thus recommends the establishment of a strong monitoring system. Progress towards the goals must be carefully tracked throughout the plan's execution, but most particularly at the five- and ten-year stages. This monitoring system should combine qualitative and quantitative methods, it should track actions required by the priorities, and should incorporate a 'dashboard' of performance indicators. These measures should take into account where Alvernia is at present and where it wants to go. They should assess the College not only internally but against peer institutions. Finally, the Council notes that the strategic plan will ultimately be implemented not by any particular group within Alvernia, but by the entire College community. Assessment of that implementation is thus imperative so that the community can measure its own growth and development.

Full Heritage Statement:

The heritage of Alvernia College and its foundational Franciscan values can be traced to the growth of three religious orders who owe their origin to the preaching of St. Francis of Assisi. They are the Friars Minor, the Poor Clares, and the "Third Order" which has two distinct branches: a secular order for the laity, and a regular order for women and men living an evangelical life with religious vows. The Bernardine Franciscan sisters, founders and sponsors of Alvernia College, are members of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis.

In the thirteenth century, the growth of the Franciscan Order was enriched by a desire for learning among the first friars and early Franciscan scholars, including the earliest Franciscan theologian, St. Anthony of Padua, followed by St. Bonaventure and Blessed John Duns Scotus, long associated with the great medieval universities of Paris and Oxford. They easily recognized the need to provide sound training in philosophy and theology for the growing members of the rapidly expanding Order. From this awareness developed the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition, founded on the spirituality and vision of Francis and Clare of Assisi. A distinguishing trait of this tradition, making it singularly different from other great western religious traditions, is the intellectual view described by saint and scholar Bonaventure as "knowledge joined with love". Franciscan education recognizes the importance of love complementing understanding and learning, and the primacy of works-oriented active love that gives the intellectual life a practical context for implementation.

Alvernia College reflects the visionary leadership and uncommon perseverance of its founding president, Sister Mary Zygmunta Froncek, and the dedicated religious and lay faculty who laid the groundwork for academic excellence, intellectual curiosity, and learning linked with charity, service and social justice. As pioneers in the field of Catholic education, the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters were part of the 20th century

movement in the Catholic Church to serve the poor and immigrant populations in America by founding and staffing schools, colleges and hospitals throughout the U.S. Their inclusive embrace positioned the congregation to serve beyond the needs of the Polish settlements, anticipating Alvernia's present-day outreach to the growing Latino community in Reading. On the campus of Mount Alvernia, the sisters opened an orphanage and a high school housed in Francis Hall. As the Order grew larger and the education of its members became a priority, the congregation founded a liberal arts college for women religious 1958, graduating its first class of 4 sisters in 1961, and with the increase in lay enrollment and expansion of academic offerings, received final accreditation from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education in November 1967.

Within a few decades, paralleling the history of the early Franciscan movement in Italy, the college grew beyond the original three educational buildings to an expanding campus with additional professional programs to complement a strong liberal arts core. Alvernia's founding mission provided the opportunity to develop new programs such as nursing, business, allied health, criminal justice and social work. This distinctive service niche afforded the college regional recognition for liberal learning and practical application, and has provided the impetus for continued dynamic growth. Since 1990, a library, physical education center, student center, science center and additional residence halls have been added to the main campus facilities to support the long-range commitment to building a strong residential learning community. At the same time, educational outreach to adult learners has expanded, including the launch of satellite campuses in Philadelphia and Pottsville, and a Seniors College which provides life-long learning opportunities to retired citizens in Berks County.

Today, Alvernia calls together students diverse in age, background, belief, and educational interests to pursue academic excellence in a range of undergraduate, graduate, and non-degree programs, including a new interdisciplinary PhD program with concentrations in Corporate, Community and Educational Leadership. Across all programs, the hallmark of an Alvernia education is a conception of learning as grounded in values, connecting classroom and community, and linked to leadership and service. With the purchase of the Upland Center in 2006, Alvernia strengthened its commitment to lifelong learning and community outreach by creating a new home for graduate and continuing education. It also launched two new initiatives: a Center of Ethics and a Center for Community Engagement, helping to incorporate the broader community into the curriculum of higher education.

Rooted in the liberal arts tradition of rigorous, open inquiry, Alvernia is faithful to its Catholic identity and the vision of Pope John Paul II as expressed in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. The university (or college) "possesses [necessary] institutional autonomy . . . and guarantees its members academic freedom," while the mission of Catholic higher education privileges "(a) the search for an integration of knowledge, (b) a dialogue between faith and reason, (c) an ethical concern, and (d) a theological perspective." (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, I, A, 12 and 15). Alvernia is also proud of its role as an educational resource for members of the Allentown Diocese and its active involvement in the national associations of both Catholic and Franciscan colleges and universities.

True to its Franciscan heritage and mission motto: **To Learn, To Love, To Serve**, Alvernia's Franciscan values have shaped its character and history since its founding. Service, humility, collegiality, contemplation, and peacemaking are institutional core values woven through the academic, co-curricular, and spiritual culture of Alvernia. Francis of Assisi, an agent of spiritual change in the Middle Ages, gave to the three Franciscan Orders and all humanity a legacy that is timeless and universal. To be Franciscan is to respect the dignity of each human person and all creation; to be open to the world and its diversity of cultures, faiths, traditions, races, and peoples; to honor right relationships; and to seek peace through action for justice. Although a young institution, Alvernia anticipates its 50th Anniversary in 2008 with great enthusiasm, embracing a rich and vibrant Franciscan heritage that is truly relevant today, rich with promise for tomorrow, and welcoming to all.