
Hope College

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Abstract

John H. Jacobson served as president of Hope College from 1987 to 1999 and had a strong commitment to strengthening Hope's endowment, ending his term with $100 million, and increasing enrollment. By 1994, successful fundraising campaigns had helped build the De Witt Tennis Center, while the Haworth Conference Center opened the winter of 1997 and Cook residence hall opened in the fall of that year. Jacobson focused his energies on increasing multicultural diversity at Hope, renewing and fulfilling Hope's mission, and using strategic planning to chart the course of the college during the 1990s. He passed away in 2005.

The collection contains addresses given by Jacobson, biographical information, correspondence, farewell open house materials from Hope College departments and faculty in 1999, Hope College inauguration materials from 1987, memorial services documents from 2005, President’s Report of Donors while he was president, and his vitae from 1987.

Biography

John Howard Jacobson was born on November 6, 1933. Jacobson graduated from Swarthmore College. After he completed his doctoral program at Yale University at age 23, Jacobson taught philosophy at Hamilton College, in Clinton, New York, and Florida Presbyterian College (now Eckerd College), in St. Petersburg, Florida. He began his career in academic administration in 1968 at Florida Presbyterian College, where he served as Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty. In 1972, he and his family moved to New York, where he served for two years as Dean of the Rochester Center of Empire State College, State University of New York, and then was appointed Vice President of Academic Affairs and later Provost, serving twice as Acting President. Thus, when he became president of Hope College at age 53, he had a background of twenty years in academic administration.

When he came to Hope College, the college’s endowment was $20 million; a major fund drive during the presidency of Dr. Gordon Van Wylen had just been successfully completed. After a strategic planning effort, Jacobson initiated another major fund drive, which raised $57 million, surpassing its goal. Before retiring, he initiated a second major fund drive, Legacies: A Vision of Hope. A major purpose of the campaign was funding the construction of a new science center; $23 million was raised in the drive’s first phase. At the end of his final year at Hope College, the college endowment stood at $105 million. He worked closely with the vice president for advancement to achieve an annual gift goal that came to exceed $12 million a year.

Throughout his twelve-year presidency, Jacobson and his wife were actively involved in fundraising for the college, meeting with alumni at gatherings around the country, and
entertaining friends of the college in the President’s Home.

While at Hope College, Jacobson served as chair of the Board of Directors of the Association of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Michigan, of the Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association, and the Great Lakes Colleges Association. He served frequently as a consultant and evaluator with regional accrediting associations, and continued to do so after retirement.

Jacobson left an enduring legacy at Hope College, through his strong commitment to maintaining the college’s Christian character. He helped to craft the campus ministries program, which remains a vibrant ministry to the Hope College and Holland communities. His commitment to the multicultural dimension of the college and to egalitarianism in hiring and promotion enriched the college’s diversity. His tenure was marked by growth of the college itself and significant recognition for Hope College and members of the college community. During his presidency, enrollment grew to over 2,900. Additions to the campus during that time included the Knickerbocker Theatre, Lugers Fieldhouse, DeWitt Tennis Center, Haworth Inn and Conference Center, and Cook Residence Hall. Hope College became the only private, four-year, liberal arts college in the country to have national accreditation in art, dance, music, and theater.

John H. Jacobson passed away in Florida on February 8, 2005.

Scope and Content

The collection contains addresses given by Jacobson, biographical information, correspondence, farewell open house materials from Hope College departments and faculty in 1999, Hope College inauguration materials from 1987, memorial services documents from 2005, Presidential Update newsletter and President’s Report of Donors while he was president, and his vitae from 1987. The collection is organized alphabetically by subject and chronologically within each folder.

Container List

Addresses, 1986-1999
Biographical, 1972-2005
Correspondence, n.d., 1999
Farewell Open Houses
  Given by Arts & Humanities Division, 1999
  Given by Jack and Lee Nyenhuis, 1999
  Given by Social Sciences Division Departments, 1999
Inauguration, 1987
Memorial Service
  Program, 2005
  Speakers Comments, 2005
  Videotape Cassette, 2005
President’s Report, 1998-1999
Publications, “Ornaments of Society” (included in A View from the Top: Liberal Arts Presidents on Teacher Education, 1990), 1989
Vitae, 1986-1987