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Moving Forward and Outward

Geoffrey D. Reynolds
Hope College, reynoldsg@hope.edu

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Moving Forward and Outward



Wynand Wichers

Wynand Wichers (1886-1971) became the sixth president of Hope College in 1931 and served until 1945. He was a 1905 graduate of the Hope Preparatory School and received his bachelor's of arts degree from Hope in 1909. He was then appointed an instructor in English and Latin at the

Preparatory School, and in 1913 became a professor of history at the College. He received a master's degree from the University of Michigan in 1918 and continued teaching until leaving in 1925 to pursue a career in the banking industry.

In 1931, he returned to Hope College as its president. He was made a Knight in the Order of Orange-Nassau of the Netherlands, in 1936. In 1946, he became vice president and dean of the faculty at Western Michigan University where he served until his retirement. He was a well-known public speaker and writer as well. After his retirement, he was commissioned by Hope College to write its history. This book, *A Century of Hope*, was published in 1969. Wichers died in Kalamazoo, on March 28, 1971.

The Wichers' years

During his tenure as president, he provided leadership to the college during both the Great Depression and the World War II years. His administration lays claim to the first Nykerk Cup competition, May Day festivities, and All-College Sing. A dramatic society, Palette and Masque, also formed during this era and became the foundation for the theatre department. Dr. Wichers' most lasting contribution was the construction of the Science Building (now Lubbers Hall), which provided laboratory facilities for the program of science education that was already achieving

national recognition. The Science Building opening in September 1942 was timely as an influx of World War II ex-servicemen, funded by the G.I. Bill, began returning to college and university campuses around the United States. This enrollment boom increased Hope's enrollment of 312 students, from the fall of 1944, to 1,374 by 1947. "The pressure for more space and better facilities, which included faculty offices, science equipment, library holdings and reading rooms, and student housing, increased dramatically," wrote Dr. John Hollenbach, professor emeritus of English, in "Coping with the Post-War Bulge: Hope College 1945-1950," in 1993. "Along with the problem of physical facilities for the tripled enrollment was the equally pressing need for more staff, at a time when all colleges and universities faced similar problems of educating the post-war student bulge," he went on to further write.

The bulge had a lasting impact on the college. The measures Hope took to meet the increased demand benefited future generations as well. "The greatly expanded curricular offerings, newly inaugurated

Wynand Wichers at Science Center groundbreaking





Lubbers Hall

discipline areas and larger staff added pressure for new and better facilities and equipment, all of which led to two decades of significant construction,” Dr. Hollenbach wrote.

Lubbers takes over

The seventh president of Hope College was Irwin J. Lubbers (1895-1985), father of former Grand Valley State University president, Arend “Don” Lubbers, a



Irwin Lubbers

native of Cedar Grove, Wis., and 1913 graduate of the Wisconsin Memorial Academy. After graduation from the Academy, he went on to Hope College, receiving his bachelor’s degree in 1917. He joined the U.S. Air Force in 1918. From 1919-1922, he worked in the Reformed Church

United States in 1922, he entered Teachers College, Columbia University, and earned his master’s degree in 1927. From 1923-1929, he was an instructor at Hope College, lecturing in English. In 1934, he and his family moved to Pella, Iowa, where Dr. Lubbers became president of Central College. Dr. Lubbers became president of Hope College in 1945 and served until 1963 when he left to become president of the Iowa Association of Private Colleges and Universities, a post he held until his retirement in 1969.

Lubbers’ legacy

Irwin Lubbers’ presidency of Hope College was a time of significant growth and achievement, as described by John Hollenbach. After a drop-off in the early 1950s, enrollment again expanded, reaching 1,534 by the time Lubbers left office. Campus facilities were greatly expanded to properly serve the current student body and to accommodate projected enrollment demands, including the construction of Durfee Hall, a women’s resident hall, opened in 1950 (now a men’s residence hall); Nykerk Hall of Music was completed in 1956; Kollen Hall, a residence hall, opened in 1957; Phelps Hall, a resident and dining hall, opened in 1960; Van Zoeren Library (now Van Zoeren Hall), opened in 1961; Gilmore Hall, a women’s residence hall opened in 1963; a heating plant; a fraternity complex (now Scott, Cosmopolitan, Lichty and Wyckoff Halls); and the renovation

of Carnegie Gymnasium and Graves Hall. As Lubbers retired from Hope's presidency, construction began on a Physics-Mathematics building (now Vander Werf Hall). Lubbers was very active in fundraising and led several fund drives through the Reformed Church and a major fund drive called "Looking Ahead with Hope."

Lubbers worked to enhance the academic vitality of Hope College and broaden its interaction with other quality colleges. During his presidency, Hope received national recognition as a college of distinction. The Vienna Summer School, a popular program at Hope, was founded in 1956. In 1960, Lubbers helped to form an association of top rank colleges, the Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA). Hope College remains a member of this 12-college consortium. Lubbers' top priority was the Hope College student. Throughout his presidency, he held an "open door policy" and started presidential luncheons, where students could communicate their needs and opinions.

After his retirement, Lubbers remained deeply in-



Lubbers at his desk

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volved with Hope College. He served as an honorary member of the college's Board of Trustees and was active in several of the college's fundraising endeavors. In 1974, the college's humanities and social science building was named in Lubbers' honor. He was also decorated by the Netherlands government with the rank of "Officer in the Order of Orange Nassau" in 1947. He passed away on Sept. 8, 1985, at the age of 89.



Student Registration at Graves Hall, 1946