

The Columbus Dispatch

Ohio's Greatest Online Newspaper

Otterbein president to leave in 2009

Wednesday, January 30, 2008 3:31 AM

By **Encarnacion Pyle**

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Most college presidents stay at their schools for five to seven years, but not Otterbein President C. Brent DeVore, known as the "dean of higher education in central Ohio."

DeVore, 65, will leave the small liberal-arts college in Westerville at the end of the 2008-09 school year after a quarter-century at Otterbein, ending his tenure as the longest-serving president of a four-year college in Ohio.

"My goal has always been to call on a Monday and say I retired the previous Friday; I guess that won't happen," he said, laughing last night after announcing his departure.

DeVore will step down June 30, 2009, giving trustees more than a year to find a replacement.

"It's been a good ride," he said. "I've been truly blessed to have so many talented, dedicated people. And we've collectively accomplished a lot."

Colleagues praised DeVore for turning Otterbein into the college it is today.

"He has set the stage for a new chapter in the life of the college, and we're well-



C. Brent DeVore has led Otterbein, a liberal-arts college in Westerville, for nearly 25 years.

positioned to take those next steps," said Tom Morrison, board chairman.

Over the years, he has focused admissions efforts on Ohio students, improved retention rates and introduced continuing-education classes for adults and graduate programs in business, education and nursing.

Otterbein has nearly doubled its enrollment to 3,107, increased its endowment from \$6 million to \$100 million and raised the percentage of faculty members with doctorates to 93 percent, from 45 percent.

The campus has almost doubled in size, and many buildings have been renovated.

DeVore also encourages students and staff to devote more time -- more than 32,000 volunteer hours in total a year -- to giving back to the community.

And he has weathered a few storms, including the negative publicity in recent years because of Otterbein's involvement with a Florida-based diploma mill. Between 1999 and 2002, Move on Toward Education and Training paid Otterbein for the use of its name on bogus academic credits.

"He's candid, friendly and has a great sense of humor," said Valeriana Moeller, president of Columbus State Community College. "I really appreciate that he can really talk to you on a personal level without getting all high-falutin."

The two colleges have worked to make it easier for students at Columbus State to transfer to Otterbein, especially in the nursing program.

DeVore is as enthusiastic and tireless as the day he started at Otterbein, said Denny Griffith, president of the Columbus College of Art & Design.

"He's been in no way whatsoever snoozing on the job," Griffith said. "And he's always been generous in sharing his time and insight."

Griffith has become best acquainted with DeVore in a club that promotes the sharing of scholarly ideas and research. "He's just a bright, quality guy."

DeVore will be missed, but not forgotten, his friends said.

"Brent has been an excellent leader of this college for more than two decades and leaves a legacy," said Mark Thresher, vice chairman of the board and president and chief operating officer of Nationwide Financial Services. "He'll be a tough act to follow."

epyle@dispatch.com

Copyright © 2008, The Columbus Dispatch
