

Macalester meets its new leader: Brian Rosenberg

James Walsh

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The chairman of the search committee made no secret of his *great expectations* for new Macalester College President Brian Rosenberg. And Rosenberg, while addressing the challenges facing higher education, acknowledged that while this is not the *best of times*, neither is it *the worst of times*.

With apologies to Charles Dickens, such literary opportunities make it seem fitting that the 16th president of the St. Paul college is an expert on Dickens.

But really, Rosenberg said Tuesday, it's ironic. Dickens, after all, had no love for bureaucrats and administrators and their suppression of human expression. There is no danger he'll become like the headmaster in "Oliver Twist," he said.

"I've probably learned more about what to try to avoid as an administrator from Dickens," Rosenberg said with a smile, noting that the author resisted calls to run for Parliament. "I am going to work very hard not to let administrative structures get in the way of relationships."

What he will be, said those associated with Rosenberg's selection, is a great fit for the 1,800-student college committed to internationalism, diversity and academic achievement.

"Rosenberg emerged from an especially strong candidate pool as a person who deeply shares Macalester's fundamental values, and reflects those values in his personal and professional life," said David Ranheim, a college trustee who was chairman of the search committee.

Rosenberg comes to Macalester from Lawrence University in Appleton, Wis., where he has been faculty dean and Dickens scholar. Before going to Lawrence, which like Macalester is a small liberal arts college, he was an English professor at Allegheny College in Meadville, Pa. An award-winning teacher, he is also the author of more than two dozen articles on Dickens and other novelists. He also has written two books.

"Brian Rosenberg will be an outstanding president of Macalester College," said Mark Vander Ploeg, chairman of the school's Board of Trustees. "He has excellent leadership and people skills and has a vision about the importance of liberal arts colleges and Macalester's role."

But leading even a renowned and internationally recognized school is not a simple or easy job.

Minutes after students, faculty members, trustees and the public filed past a lone bagpiper and into their seats for Rosenberg's introduction, Vice President of Student Affairs Laurie Hamre told the crowd that a Macalester student had died in an apparent suicide. It was another piece of sad news in what Hamre described as "a spring that's been so hard."

A prospective student was raped while staying in a Macalester dormitory April 25. No arrest has been made. And a 22-year-old Macalester student who police say had sexually explicit images of tied-up girls on his dormitory computer was charged on May 8 with one count of disseminating child pornography and 19 counts of possessing child pornography.

Introducing Rosenberg, Hamre said, was a chance to share some good news with the campus community. And the crowd greeted its new president with a warm ovation.

Rosenberg replaces Michael McPherson, who is stepping down next month after six years at the helm. An economist by training, McPherson led Macalester through impressive financial growth. The college raised more than \$55 million and diversified its endowment, which had been concentrated in Reader's Digest stock. New construction has boomed on campus and scholarship funding was increased.

Continuing that momentum in difficult economic times will be a challenge, Rosenberg said.

A shaky stock market has decreased endowment values. Sources for other funding have declined. And families looking at colleges are having a tougher time affording the ride.

Does that mean Macalester has become a *bleak house*? Not at all, Rosenberg said.

It means that the college must spread the message that a liberal arts education remains vital. Sometimes the advantages aren't seen until years after graduation, he said. That can clash with a society that demands more immediate measures.

"One has to continually make the case for the values of these colleges," he said.

James Walsh is at jwalsh@startribune.com.

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