130 YEARS, NEW PRESIDENT: Macalester enjoys double celebration

St. Paul's Macalester College will turn 130 years young this weekend at the same time it installs its 16th president, Brian Rosenberg. The new college president steps into an environment already rich with academic inquiry and talent. The college's excellent faculty and fine students have long placed Macalester among the best of the elite liberal arts colleges in the country.

Rosenberg's challenge will be to build on that fine reputation, taking the college to even higher heights of scholarship while sustaining Macalester's tradition of internationalism and public service. It's amazing that by the time they graduate, 80 percent of Macalester's students have participated in community service activities including those at homeless shelters, student tutoring, environmental cleanup and building Habitat for Humanity homes. That spirited commitment suggests the best kind of well-rounded young adult who has the ability to meet the college's academic requirements and yet pursue social justice in small and large ways.

The pursuit reflects the college's founding and early affiliation with the Presbyterian Church, which has long valued social justice. Macalester received a charter from the state in 1874. Today the college's ties with the church are minimal, but it carries forward its Presbyterian heritage of social justice.

Over time the college's academic reputation blossomed, as well. U.S. News & World Report ranks Macalester as the 25th best liberal arts college in the country among 217. Academically, it is ranked 15th. Admission to the college is very competitive, yet 70 percent of its students qualify for and receive financial aid. The college has a need-blind admission policy, which assures that promising students are admitted without regard to family wealth.

Impressive, also, is the college's steadfast belief in internationalism. Fourteen percent of the college's 1,851 students are from other countries. Additionally, half of all students study abroad at some point.

With the above as a starting place, it might appear that Rosenberg's job is cushy, even enviable. Formerly the dean of faculty and an English professor at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wis., Rosenberg, 48, brings a high energy level and keen intellect to his new job. He's said he wants to help bring the college to its full potential, while improving relations with its 22,232 alumni scattered across the globe.

Macalester has proved itself on many fronts as an asset to St. Paul. Happy Birthday, Mac.

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