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## Committed to CHRIST ~ COMMUNITY ~ EXCELLENCE

### A Message from Head of School Dr. Duda



The phrase “college and career ready” has become so widely used in articles, speeches, and legislative policy that it has created a sense of confusion around what the term really means and, more importantly, has clouded why we (as Christians) should really care about it. I, myself, have used the term frequently to best describe the overarching work we are doing in Kingdom education. According to the Illinois Board of Education, college and career readiness skills teach students to demonstrate independence, build strong content knowledge, respond to varying demands, comprehend and critique, value evidence, and use technology capably. At Rockford Christian, we have the opportunity, and calling, to look at these standards in light of the Gospel. College and career readiness for Christian education include perseverance,

social intelligence, self-control, passion, gratitude, and hope. Each is grounded in Scripture and each ultimately guides students to do more than just *be ready* for college or a career. Our readiness standards prepare students to impact the world for Christ and are often where we spend most of our time, at home and at school, because it takes an intentional investment of time, energy, resources, and biblical worldview to prepare young adults in each of these areas.

Let’s consider perseverance, for example. Perseverance is a continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition, and it is known to be a better predictor of success than talent. Did you catch that? Perseverance is a better predictor of success than talent. Wow. Think about the number of experiences you’ve had in your lifetime where you learned to persevere and then consider how each one of those experiences prepared you for where you are today. We know we will have hardships in this life, but they lead us to become people who persevere to the ultimate goal, our resurrection in Christ. It is because of Him that we can press on and continue to live a purpose-filled life (Romans 5:2-5). Perseverance (aka grit or resilience) is essential for us as we live the life God has called us to live; it is essential for our maturity as believers (Hebrews 12:1; James 1:2-5).

Rockford Christian has persevered through quite a bit in recent years, but we see evidence of grit and resilience every day through the lives of our students, the dedication of our employees, and the support of alumni families. As we enter into the final semester of the year, our perseverance toward common goals related to our mission (knowing Christ as Lord, applying God’s truth in life, loving others well, and doing it all with the excellence He deserves) will come to fruition as we plan for the future and wisely shepherd His people and His resources. Our faithful perseverance will be a key predictor of RC’s success.

Please join me this semester in praying for the Lord’s wisdom and guidance as we not only make plans for the 2023-2024 school year, but also consider where the Lord wants us to be three and five years from

now. May we faithfully test the vision He has placed in the hearts of our leaders, including my own.

Blessings,  
Jahna Duda

*“Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don’t try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.”*

*James 1:2-4*



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Psalm 115:13-15

### **Stability Marker ~ Demand Exceeds Capacity**

A few days ago, we introduced **Continuous Enrollment**, a simple one-step process for re-enrollment that positions RC to more accurately measure enrollment supply and demand, an independent school stability marker for overall school health and well-being. Long-term stability requires certain enrollment benchmarks (50, 75, and 100 students per grade level, for example) to be met before opening another section or increasing the budget for faculty, resources, and materials. We are seeing growth in certain grade levels, and knowing whether or not we are reaching the next benchmark in early spring allows my team the opportunity to appropriately scale programs, hire qualified faculty, and maintain a fiscally responsible budget for students and families.

After current RC families are through the Continuous Enrollment window, we will open enrollment to the general public. Your word-of-mouth marketing for our faculty, programs, and mission is the #1 reason new families select RC. We appreciate your influence on our mission, and we hope to welcome your friends and neighbors as we fill certain grade levels to capacity for 2023-2024. Thank you for your perseverance in standing with us to see the mission of Rockford Christian flourish into the future.

### **Strategic Plan Update**

Our Admin Team began building the categories for the strategic plan by examining a series of standards created by the Council for Educational Standards and Accountability (CESA) and Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). After our work session, the group settled on broad categories such as Mission Clarity, Academics & Programs of Distinction (including athletics, fine arts, clubs, etc), and Christian Community. These categories, and a few others to be developed, will be where the Strategic Planning Committee places specific goals related to dual credit, internships, fine arts, STEM, strength and conditioning, technology, and facility enhancements. Each goal focused on ensuring Rockford Christian is a “high-performing” Christian institution delivering the very best education to students” (CESA Standards, p. 1). Our larger Strategic Planning Committee convenes in February. I’ll provide a summary of their work in the next newsletter.

### **School Choice Week**

Today marks the final day for National School Choice Week 2023 which places a special emphasis on the number of K-12 educational options available to students and families. Christian education offers a holistic educational option for students that integrates Christianity, academics, the arts, athletics, and all of life. It has been the fabric of our educational landscape for hundreds of years and has played a role in the formation of our nation’s character. As I’ve worked in Christian education over the last 23 years, I have been grateful for a parent’s right to choose educational options that align with the family’s values and the student’s needs. I remain especially thankful for options, like **Rockford Christian**, which

allow me to combine my love of children and passion for education within a safe, loving, Christ-centered environment. As we close out this week, I want to extend to you my sincere gratitude for choosing Rockford Christian! Thank you!



Former Rockford Christian teacher, Shirley Davis, passes away.

"What a blessing Shirley was to not only Rockford Christian School, but to all. She always gave of herself as she knitted and sent out over 1300 scarves to mission organizations worldwide." Ms. Stadel reflecting on Shirley's heart for the Lord, Rockford Christian, and for others

<https://obits.andersonfcs.com/obituary/shirley-davis>

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