



January-February, 2008

**EXECUTIVE SEARCH PROFILE**  
**PRESIDENT**



**Shimer**

**The Great Books  
College of Chicago**

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**THE OPPORTUNITY**

To lead a 155-year old institution of higher learning that epitomizes a tradition of broad and free inquiry in the liberal arts that is receding, perhaps vanishing, in American education; to become a national and international spokesperson for Great Books education and for Shimer College as one of its leading centers; and to make the most of the resilience and fortitude of this enduring College and, in particular, to capitalize on turn-around initiatives achieved by recent Presidents.

**THE COLLEGE**

Shimer College is a small, independent, and extraordinary four-year liberal arts baccalaureate institution--one of only a few schools with an integrated Great Books (or "original sources") core curriculum (two-thirds of the credits for the degree). It is the purpose of the College to teach students how, not what, to think, by developing the intellectual virtues of clear expression, rigorous reasoning, and critical open-mindedness, primarily through disciplined discussion in small classes. The College, which does not offer departmental majors, provides the opportunity to develop breadth of knowledge across the Humanities, the Natural Sciences, and the Social Sciences, which is increasingly rare in this age of specialization. Shimer is a social as well as an academic community, governed democratically with the active participation of all its constituents, guided by an ethos of dialogue and shared inquiry, and with a culture of intellectual seriousness that aims at the integration of community life with the examined life.

"Unknown, Unsung, and Unusual" -- that was the title of an article on Shimer College that appeared in *Time* magazine in 1963, and that title still applies today. The excellence of the College has not, however, gone entirely unrecognized by the broader public. The *Chicago Tribune Education Section* declared that "among colleges and universities professing to teach students how to think, little Shimer succeeds like almost no place else." In 1959, the ETS released a study of performance by seniors on the Graduate Record Examination and Shimer, out

## THE COLLEGE (continued)

of 222 colleges, scored first in the Humanities and the Natural Sciences and tied for first in the Social Sciences. The *Harvard Educational Review* listed Shimer College as “one of eleven U.S. campuses with an ideal intellectual climate.” In 1968, David Riesman and Christopher Jencks wrote in *The Academic Revolution*, “What is remarkable is that the students move so rapidly and so far from their points of departure.... Both Shimer and the College at [the University of] Chicago present impressive statistical evidence that their students are better prepared for graduate work in the arts and sciences and in the professions than those who have specialized in particular areas....” In 1997, Shimer was ranked third in the nation, and first among liberal arts schools, in percentage of graduates who earn Ph.D.’s.

In 1853, Shimer College was founded in Mount Carroll, Illinois, by Frances Wood Shimer and Cinderella Gregory, two visionary women committed to admitting students based upon capability rather than educational background. In 1895, Frances Shimer and William Rainey Harper, the founding President of the University of Chicago, established an affiliation between the two institutions. In 1950 Shimer adopted Chicago’s undergraduate “Hutchins Plan,” an integrated curriculum of original sources grounded in the Great Books tradition; discussion classes; and the development of competencies in thought, speech, and writing.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the rural location in western Illinois and other factors led to severe financial difficulties. Shimer College came through this crucible, unlike many other small private colleges in that decade in what is surely one of the more dramatic episodes in the history of American education. A small band of faculty and students led by former President Don Moon took what could be salvaged of the College and moved it -- in grain trucks, during the great snowstorm of ’79 -- to a single building in Waukegan, Illinois, offered by the city’s Mayor, where they kept the College alive at the cost of personal hardship and financial sacrifice.

After decades of precarious existence, in 2006, the College, under the Presidency of William Craig Rice, entered into an arrangement with the Illinois Institute of Technology, whereby Shimer would relocate to the IIT Chicago campus, retain its independence, and take advantage of opportunities for collaboration, synergy, and growth. IIT, in turn, was to benefit from the rich liberal arts offerings of Shimer College. The broad range of IIT courses, especially in the sciences and pre-professional fields, is now available to Shimer students, as well as its libraries and the plethora of student services and activities that a large university campus can provide.

The College offers an *Undergraduate Weekday Program* for traditional-age college students; an *Undergraduate Weekend Program* for adults; an *Early Entrants Program* for highly motivated high school students; a *Study Abroad Program* in Oxford, England; and a graduate *Teaching Fellows Program* for K-8 teachers.

There are 11 full-time and two part-time faculty members, and 93 percent hold a Ph.D. or equivalent terminal degree. There are approximately 75 undergraduates, representing most states and two foreign countries. The IIT host campus includes more than 100 facilities on a 450-acre site, with campus activities featuring more than 150 student organizations.



### **Mission**

*The mission of Shimer College is education—education for active citizenship in the world. Education is more than the acquisition of factual knowledge or the mastery of vocational skills. It is the process leading away from passivity, beyond either unquestioning acceptance of authority or its automatic mistrust, and towards informed, responsible action.*

### **BACKGROUND**

Shimer College has fulfilled its mission for more than 150 years, but for nearly all of its existence has been financially “on the edge,” always facing the challenge of obtaining the endowment and operating resources sufficient to sustain itself. When Shimer relocated to Chicago in 2006, the intention was to become more enticing to students and more visible to donors. In the fall of 2007, President Rice accepted a call to Washington, D.C. to head the Division of Education Programs at the National Endowment for the Humanities. He has been succeeded by Dr. Ronald O. Champagne, who was appointed as the Interim President in October. Dr. Champagne is President Emeritus of Saint Xavier University in Chicago, where he served from 1982 to 1994, leading a ten-year expansion that resulted in the institution’s change in status from a college to a university.

According to Dr. Christopher Nelson, President of St. John’s College in Annapolis, Maryland, and Chair of the Board of Trustees of Shimer College, “Ron Champagne brings an extraordinary wealth of experience . . . he has extensive presidential and fundraising experience . . . we are incredibly fortunate to have a person of his caliber for our President . . . this should be an energizing year for the College.”

As anticipated by the Board Chairman, under the direction of Dr. Champagne, Shimer College is already in the early stages of what could become a very significant turn-around in the annals of American higher education. The indicators for fall 2008 enrollment have risen exponentially; a Renaissance Plan to fund and implement substantial infra-structure expansions of enrollment management and institutional advancement operations has been launched; the move to Chicago appears to have been a brilliant stroke; and the academic partnership with IIT may lead to other collaborations or joint degree programs with institutions in the greater Chicago region.

The recently drafted long-range plan calls for measured growth to at least 250 and perhaps as many as 500 students. While it is imperative to achieve this objective, the potential for the future far exceeds the scope of this modest goal. Shimer College is a significant but underutilized national asset. Its demanding original sources curriculum and Socratic pedagogy could be, with inspired and inspiring Presidential leadership, a major influence on American education, as an alternative to mounting and related trends toward occupational preparation, with its consequent specialization, toward the acquisition of knowledge without critical reflection, and toward making it as easy as possible to obtain a degree.

Consequently, there is a mandate for the next President to have a deep understanding and appreciation for everything that Shimer represents and also the vision and energy to enlarge the institution’s footprint and thereby its contributions to the larger society. This will necessitate consensus-building leadership skills and, in particular, the ability to work with the Assembly of



## **BACKGROUND (continued)**

the College (where faculty, students, and staff all have a vote) in the process of decision-making related to mission, strategic direction, and the future. The College community does recognize, however, that the College is not served by decision-making processes so inclusive that administration is micro-managed by the whole community and the President and staff are left unable to do their jobs at a realistic pace.

## **CHALLENGES**

### **Major challenges for the next President are:**

- Sustaining and expanding the current initiative for substantial enrollment growth;
- Converting survival fundraising to a steady and reliable flow;
- Managing the transitions that will result from the College's projected growth, not only in students, but also in administrative staff and faculty; a high proportion of current faculty is close to retirement and new faculty will be expected to teach across two of the Humanities, Social Science, and Natural Science areas;
- Managing limited resources carefully and prudently;
- Elevating the profile of Shimer College on the local, regional, and national levels; and participating in the national dialogue on education;
- Developing a competitive compensation structure for faculty and staff;
- Building and fostering a strong, diverse, supportive, and generous Board of Trustees;
- Capitalizing upon — and potentially enlarging — collaboration opportunities with the Illinois Institute of Technology and with other peer institutions in the greater Chicago region; and
- Accomplishing the above without compromising the fundamental liberal arts and Great Books identity of the College or its democratic ethos, and while retaining the support of a community passionately devoted to Shimer.

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

Shimer College seeks a leader with an exceptional professional background with distinctive accomplishments that evince the capacity to serve as the CEO of the College, and who:

- Is a person of unquestioned integrity;
- Has a comprehensive understanding of and passion for small liberal arts colleges and is excited about making this commitment to Shimer;
- Is a highly capable, innovative fundraiser with a successful track record;



### **QUALIFICATIONS (continued)**

- Respects and is able to work with faculty and students as well as administrative colleagues; and to provide effective, inspiring, and courageous leadership within a highly democratic organization;
- Has intellectual strength and a Ph.D. or equivalent, but is not necessarily a traditional academic;
- Is an excellent communicator with strong interpersonal skills; is visible to all constituencies; and is prepared to be an effective spokesperson and advocate for the College;
- Has a clear understanding of admissions and financial aid operations, as well as factors that impact student retention and graduation rates; and
- Is able and prepared to initiate collaborative academic programs between Shimer College and other institutions;

### **APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

Applications are due by **February 22, 2008**, when screening will begin. To be considered, candidates should e-mail, as Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat attachments: 1) a cover letter that addresses the challenges and qualifications listed above; 2) a current résumé or curriculum vitae; and 3) the names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of three references to: **pauldoeg@rhperry.net**.

#### **For Further Information, Contact:**

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### **POLICY**

R. H. Perry & Associates is committed to the highest standards of professionalism in all dealings with candidates, sources, and references. We fully respect the need for confidentiality and assure interested parties that their background and interests will not be discussed without consent of the applicant prior to her or his becoming a candidate.

*Shimer College is an affirmative action, equal opportunity institution.*

**[www.shimer.edu](http://www.shimer.edu)**



**KEY INDICATORS - 2006**

Investment in Plant, less depreciation:	\$731,000
Plant Replacement Insured Value:	\$1,000,000
Cost of Operating Physical Plant:	\$315,000
Endowment:	\$250,000
Budget:	\$2,925,200
Tuition:	\$22,625
Student Enrollment for Fall 2007 - FTE:	68
Average SAT Scores:	661 Critical Reading 561 Math 618 Writing 27 ACT
Freshman Retention Rate:	Approx. 77%
Graduation Rate:	Approx. 47%
Living Alumni:	5,615
Number of Full-time Faculty:	11
Faculty Salaries:	\$33,850 - \$55,850
Student/Teacher Ratio:	8.1
Degrees:	BA, BS
Library Volumes:	21,000