Higher education, including its role in society and the economy, is in the midst of a profound disruption. Today’s college students grew up during the Great Recession of 2008 and 2009, and they and their parents continue to face and wrestle with the twin forces of globalization and technological change. These forces often have led students to put their faith in selecting the “right” major, and higher education has been slow to respond to these forces. Indeed the current disruptions require a visionary response if we are to adapt and to serve our students well, if we are to help students think beyond the “right” major to a comprehensive education that forms the next generation in faithful and foundational ways that ensure a lifelong approach to vocation and calling. Thus, in this year’s President’s Report, I would like to explain a new and innovative effort to change career development from a student support office to a core component of Calvin’s educational strategy—a bold, new initiative launching this fall called Calvin LifeWork.
LISTENING FOR THE CALL
When I talk to Calvin students about their long-term future, I hear very consistent aspirations: a desire to follow Jesus in the work of renewing a broken world, a desire for meaningful work, and rich and rewarding relationships with family, friends and in community. This is because many students see their primary identity as people who belong to God, have been redeemed and are now called by God to develop their own unique identity in response to his call.

This broad set of aspirations is often referred to as our vocation, and the cultivation of this unique identity in gratitude to God’s call is what we, who serve at Calvin, feel called to do. This is a different sense of the future, or at least the near future, however, than society today tends to value. Often today’s students want to talk about the “right” major or the “right” job. And while some seem to have a lot of clarity about the next steps needed for the near future, many others do not, and they are looking for guidance. For those of us who are far along in life, it is easy to forget what it feels like to be in these students’ shoes. As I have reflected in recent weeks and months on my own vocational experience and journey, it has reminded me of some important lessons I hope higher education can consider.

As a middle school and early high school student, my career aspirations were modest, but originated from my primary passions. I thought that the best use of my gifts and drive was in Major League Baseball. My high school coach viewed my gifts differently, especially since I couldn’t hit a curveball. He advised me that my future aspirations would be better suited to something in math or science. Since I liked science and people, I figured I would pursue the only thing I could think of that might combine these two interests of mine: a career in medicine.

I started my vocational journey in much the same way that most people do, I let my passions and abilities be my guide. This was a good place to start, but my experience at a Christian college helped me to build on this internal motivation and connect it to an understanding of my responsibilities to my neighbors around the corner and across the world.

This discovery happened in a core course I took in international relations, and my early aspirations for a career in medicine pretty quickly got sidelined. It was a bit disorienting because I thought I had things figured out pretty well. But I discovered the truth in Frederick Buechner’s oft-quoted words: “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”
My own experience and the time I spend listening to our students have taught me a few important lessons.

1. A high school student’s vocational imagination is highly constrained by his or her limited knowledge and experience.

2. Students coming to a Christian college may come looking for a career but should discover a vocation.

3. Students often decide to pursue a career path based on very limited information.

4. This limited experience often leads students to choose a major too soon, eliminating all other options.

5. Some students get to college, know what they want to pursue with a high degree of certainty, follow that path and graduate in exactly the area they had planned from the start. Others really don’t know what they want to do, but there is tremendous social pressure to come up with an answer, any answer. The significant investment in a college education amplifies the pressure to answer.

It was wonderful to find something that connected my deepest passion to the world’s deepest need, and from that point forward I pursued a passion that since has led me to a series of unexpected career steps I never would have imagined.

The theology of vocation has also helped me recognize God’s call to a much broader set of responsibilities than just my career. My education during those years was a process of discovering my own unique gifts, skills, abilities and responsibilities, my unique identity in Christ. I don’t play center field anymore, and I don’t wear a white doctor’s coat, but I have discovered a calling and a career as an educator I would not have anticipated.

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Many students coming of age in the 1960s and 1970s saw college as a path to discover the meaning of life and expected to find a career later, even as I was blessed as a college freshman to wander into a core course that sparked a passion that led to a career. Today’s students, burdened by economic anxiety, see college as a path to discover a career and hope to find meaning later.

At Calvin, we want and expect to equip students for both lives of meaning and careers, and to help our students see how the two concepts can work together—how careers can, in fact, be meaningful ways to respond to God’s call to be difference makers.
CHRISTIAN LIBERAL ARTS FOUNDATION

Many students and parents have become so preoccupied with future employment and the value proposition of Christian higher education that they have turned to “cheaper” education alternatives that don’t reflect their values. Calvin offers an education where all students’ learning is deeply rooted in the liberal arts and sciences from a Reformed Christian perspective. Calvin students study the liberal arts and select from a broad range of majors and professional programs. The college fosters scholarship that creates new knowledge, that performs creative work, and that sustains natural and cultural resources.

A Calvin education, marked by scholarly engagement with enduring questions and emerging concerns, prepares students to answer God’s call to live and serve in God’s world as agents of renewal.

What we observe at Calvin is that employers are seeking graduates who have pursued the kind of education available at Calvin. They want people who exhibit the qualities of Calvin graduates: people who believe things can be better, who see an unsolved problem as the catalyst for a game-changing solution, who look at the world in new ways and who, in the words of our mission statement, think deeply, act justly and live wholeheartedly. People like this are scarce in today’s economy, and we believe it is deeply rooted in our mission to develop our students for such service in this broken world.
LIFE AND WORK IN THE NEW ECONOMY

As we work to develop our graduates in alignment with Calvin’s mission, we also recognize that the world of work is changing dramatically.

A recent study by economists Lawrence F. Katz and Alan B. Krueger finds that all employment growth in the U.S. since 2005 has come in the form of freelance contract work. In the old economy, colleges prepared students for defined career paths, graduates signed on with companies, those companies trained and developed new employees, and successful employees moved up within the company. In the new economy, colleges must prepare individuals to be stewards of their knowledge, skills and values.

A recent article in the Chronicle of Higher Education summarizes this situation: “The changing nature of work in the 21st century has serious implications for the job-preparation role that colleges play in our economy. Rather than educate students for specific occupations or broader career fields, as in the past, institutions need to groom undergraduates for a more complex, fragmented workplace with many overlapping pathways.”

The forces of globalization, automation and organizational fragmentation mean that students need to be in a pattern of directing their own learning and development to adapt to a changing economy. At Calvin, we have developed a program where students learn how to direct their own learning and development and to prepare for the dynamism of the new economy.
CALVIN LIFEWORK VISION

Calvin LifeWork is an incentivized, four-year, co-curricular program that provides an integrative approach to helping students discover their unique vocational identity, from the point of initial contact with Calvin all the way to graduation.

The Calvin LifeWork program provides a distinctive approach to career and life preparation for every student from every major. We know that the current generation of students bears a certain amount of angst and insecurity about the future and their place in it. Discussions between students and their parents about college choices often center on choosing majors that have a direct path to specific kinds of jobs. This works very well for students on a linear path, but what happens when the college experience reveals a new talent or interest? What happens when the economy changes and a certain path of preparation is less valuable? Calvin LifeWork students will not sacrifice purpose or practicality. We believe that Calvin is uniquely situated to help students unite their hearts and minds to engage the world, and we are committed to walking alongside students as they discover personal vocation through a deep and daring pursuit of excellence.

The Calvin LifeWork program provides a system of preparation for students early in their academic and personal development to ensure that they are well prepared to answer the unique challenges of today. Through a series of workshops, experiential learning opportunities and intentional coaching, students will be guided through significant milestone activities designed to help them develop a holistic understanding of vocation that clearly aligns work opportunities with their God-given calling and areas of interest.

In each of the four years, students will engage modules focused on four critical content areas: Vocation, Career and Graduate School Readiness, Financial Literacy and Life Skills, and Leadership.

**Vocation**

Focused on equipping students to understand their unique identity and calling, this track covers topics such as understanding vocation, discovering God’s call, discerning unique identity and responding to the call.
Career and graduate school readiness
Focused on equipping students for professional experiences during and after they graduate from Calvin College, this track covers topics such as major selection, résumé and cover letter development, interviewing skills, job searching, networking and workplace professionalism. Two core components of this track are the JobZology assessment at the onset of the program and completion of an internship prior to the fourth year. Students who intend to go to graduate school also benefit from workshops to assist in graduate school selection, application to grad school and completion of a graduate fellowship.

Financial literacy and life skills
Focused on equipping students to respond faithfully to God's call to financial and personal stewardship, this track covers topics such as financial principles grounded in faith, banking basics, personal budget development, benefits and insurance, income tax, credit usage, housing and lifestyle choices, and investment fundamentals.

Leadership development
Focused on equipping students to live as wholehearted agents of renewal, this track covers topics such as effective communication, teamwork, intercultural competency, time management, ethics and values in the workplace, and building community after college.

This year’s group of incoming first-year students will be the first cohort to be eligible for this program. We believe in this program’s capacity to complement their education in any major and transform their approach to lifelong career preparation. In addition, when students complete the training in each of these areas of focus and complete an internship before the fall of their senior year, they will receive a $3,000 scholarship.
As I look back on my own vocational formation some might say I was “lucky,” but as a follower of Jesus I believe it was God’s providence. Still, after realizing I couldn’t hit a curveball, I was fortunate enough to have a great Christian college education, wise mentors and an open door to some wonderful experiences, but none of this was integrated or directed by the college. Vocational formation and career preparation have not been considered a critical educational strategy by most institutions of higher learning. This must change in higher education, and at Calvin we intend to lead the way. Calvin LifeWork is one of our central fundraising priorities, and we will need your help to achieve this goal. Thank you in advance for your support. As always, we are grateful for the prayerful support from our alumni, donors and friends to make programs like Calvin LifeWork possible.

Michael K. Le Roy
President, Calvin College
2016 Highlights

**January**

Senior Martin Cervantes organizes a water drive to help with the water crisis in Flint, Michigan. Fifty volunteers make the trip to Flint, taking with them 300 cases and 80 gallons of water.

As part of the January Series, globally recognized Christian intellectuals George Marsden, Richard Mouw, Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff—all former Calvin professors—discuss “The Renaissance of Christian Thought.”

**February**

In partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary and the Michigan Department of Corrections, Calvin launches the Calvin Prison Initiative, becoming the first college in Michigan to offer bachelor’s degrees to inmates.

Don DeGraaf, director of off-campus programs, publishes *There and Back: Living and Learning Abroad*. The book is for students studying abroad.

**March**

The Calvin College Center for Faith and Writing launches; a month later the Festival of Faith and Writing celebrates its silver anniversary.

Calvin professors David Smith and Susan Felch team up with Calvin colleagues to publish *Teaching and Christian Imagination*. The book’s goal is to help weary teachers reimagine their callings through a Christian lens.

**April**

Juniors Anna Michmerhuizen and Lauren Strohbehn are named Goldwater Scholars.

Graphics editor John Muyskens ’15 is part of a team of *Washington Post* reporters honored with the Pulitzer Prize in the National Reporting category.
MAY
Nearly 900 students representing more than 60 majors participate in the spring Commencement ceremony.
Senior Janaya Crevier earns a Fulbright Scholarship to explore the journeys of a half-dozen refugee families in Austria.

JUNE
Professors from numerous disciplines collaborate on the inaugural HEALTH Camp, a free camp for girls between nine and 15 years old with the goal of educating girls about their bodies and promoting a culture of health.
Calvin wins the Commissioner’s Cup in athletics, which is the all-sports award given to the top program in the MIAA.

JULY
The Plaster Creek Stewards, a group of Calvin faculty, staff and students working with local partners to restore the health and beauty of this watershed, receive two grants totaling $800,000, allowing the group to expand its educational, research and restoration work in one of the state’s most polluted watersheds.

AUGUST
The college announces the Calvin LifeWork program (see p. 2 for more info).

SEPTEMBER
U.S. News & World Report ranks Calvin College #1 among Midwest regional colleges. Calvin also ranks #1 in the Midwest Regional category for “A Strong Commitment to Undergraduate Teaching.”
“You Make a Difference: No more Bullying!” takes the stage in west Michigan. Professor Debra Freeberg’s production results from years of research on the topic. In November, students perform at the International Bullying Prevention Association’s conference in New Orleans.

OCTOBER
The American Heart Association awards campus safety patrol supervisor Ron Venneman and student officer Josh Kuperus with Heart Saver Hero Awards for their life-saving efforts earlier in the year.

NOVEMBER
A lunar sample from Apollo 15’s mission to Earth’s moon in 1971 is displayed in Calvin’s Bruce Dice Mineralogical Museum.
Joke Ayoola, an associate professor of nursing, receives a 2016 YWCA Tribute Award for her work promoting women’s health in Grand Rapids neighborhoods.
The women’s volleyball team wins the DIII national championship. It’s the program’s third title in seven years.

DECEMBER
The men’s soccer team captures its 10th-consecutive league title and makes the national championship final for the third time in eight years.
Calvin adds a master of accounting to its graduate-level offerings. The new program allows students to earn both a bachelor’s and master’s degree within five years.
FINANCIAL STATUS

2015-16 CURRENT FUNDS REVENUE (IN MILLIONS)

- TUITION & FEES $116.9
- ROOM & BOARD $19.0
- RESTRICTED GIFTS, GRANTS AND CONTRACTS $9.9
- ENDOWMENT INCOME $5.1
- OPERATING GIFTS $3.6
- DENOMINATIONAL MINISTRY SHARE $2.4
- CONFERENCES AND CAMPUS EVENTS $2.6
- OTHER REVENUE $8.1

2015-16 CURRENT FUNDS EXPENDITURES (IN MILLIONS)

- SALARIES & WAGES $52.4
- BENEFITS $18.7
- COLLEGE FINANCIAL AID & SCHOLARSHIPS $47.3
- OCCUPANCY $12.6
- FOOD CONTRACT $10.5
- DEBT SERVICE $5.0
- OTHER $21.1

ENDOWMENT MARKET VALUE

ENDOWMENT PER STUDENT USING 12-MONTH FULL-TIME ENROLLMENT

12-MONTH STUDENT FULL-TIME ENROLLMENT

LONG-TERM DEBT REDUCTION