Dear Alumni, Family, and Friends,

As I start my second year as president, I am thoroughly energized by the enthusiasm and exciting work that is visible around campus, and by the enormous potential of Clark University to meet the educational challenges of this new century. This past April the Board of Trustees approved a new strategic plan for Clark. Our plan lays out the steps we will take to elevate the reputation of Clark University as one of this country’s finest liberal arts universities and to enhance the resources available to Clark to realize this goal. The work we commit to together in this plan will propel Clark forward, unambiguously increasing the visibility and reputation of the University as a place of consequence in the world.

The cornerstone of our plan is Liberal Education and Effective Practice (LEEP™), a set of initiatives that will establish Clark as the destination of choice for many highly talented and engaged undergraduate students. LEEP builds on the historic and distinctive strengths of Clark to offer a new model of liberal education for the 21st century, one in which our students will develop innovative, new approaches to tough problems; cultivate the wisdom and judgment to make good decisions; and build the resilience and creativity to translate ideas into action (to view a summary of the strategic plan visit clarku.edu/afplan; for more on LEEP, visit clarku.edu/leep).

Graduates of Clark whom I speak with across the country, both recent alumni and those from earlier decades, praise the quality of the educational experience at Clark and strongly believe that their liberal education has provided an excellent foundation for their lives, careers, and citizenship. Clark has always been firmly centered on the opportunities afforded to students by a high-quality liberal education delivered in the context of a small research university. Over the past decade we have invested in these core strengths, hiring a new generation of accomplished faculty, upgrading technology and facilities, and strengthening the campus life experience. With this strong foundation in place, it is time for us to act boldly and with urgency to advance liberal education. Our focus is on enhancing student learning. As in past decades, graduates will leave Clark with the knowledge, skills, habits of mind, and character needed to ensure their professional, personal, and civic accomplishments. LEEP will advance these skills and capabilities for the new opportunities and challenges facing our graduates in the workforce, in their communities, and in the world.

It is abundantly clear to me that the reputation of American universities in the new millennium will turn on our capacity to deliver enhanced learning outcomes for students. Colleges and universities that approach student learning with greater intentionality, rigor, and accountability will be well positioned to thrive in the coming decade. You and I know that we need graduates who are team-based problem solvers with imagination — leaders who can analyze risk and make thoughtful, confident, timely decisions in a fiercely competitive and demanding climate. Clark, through LEEP, will lead the way.

Great strides have been made in recent years analyzing and documenting the types of experiences that best promote student learning. At Clark we are extending this commitment to rigorous analysis to all stages of the educational process, from how we admit students to the University, to assessment of student learning, through to how we can best support alumni in their critical years following graduation. You will read in the interview with Don Honeman, dean of admissions and financial aid (pg. 58), that Clark University has made the decision to become standardized-test optional in undergraduate admissions. We are doing so in large part because research has indicated that standardized admissions tests do not assess effectively and may overshadow in the admission process other capabilities that are critical to success in college, including such qualities as student engagement, work ethic, and individual responsibility.

Lastly, our focus in LEEP on learning outcomes reflects a commitment to documentation and accountability. In recent years a great deal of information has become available regarding what colleges and students actually do to accomplish educational goals. Using data from the National Survey of Student Engagement,
for example, we are learning much about such issues as how the level of participation of students in research at Clark University compares with that taking place at other liberal arts colleges and universities. Over time, I believe that we will see a shift toward greater availability of information on educational experiences and outcomes, increased consideration of these data by prospective students and parents in the college search process, and ultimately a trend toward measuring the reputations of universities on the basis of documented educational outcomes. These trends in my view will serve Clark students well and more broadly address the educational needs of our country and our world.

Our goal is nothing less than making Clark a national leader in liberal education, a university with an enhanced international reputation for excellence. We will accomplish this goal only with your engagement and support. A central part of our LEEP initiative is the adoption of a new model of alumni engagement, one in which alumni are full stakeholders in our goals, plans, and action initiatives. Starting with this issue of CLARK alumni magazine, I invite you to learn more about Clark and LEEP and to think about the ways in which you can join with us in accomplishing an exciting shared vision for our great University.

Sincerely,

DAVID P. ANGEL
President

The LEEP effect

Clark’s innovative and developmental approach to liberal education combines the essential learning outcomes developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities with a new learning outcome uniquely focused on effective practice.

Foundational Liberal Educational Skills and Capacities

1. Knowledge of the Natural World and Human Cultures and Societies — including foundational disciplinary knowledge and the ability to employ different ways of knowing the world in its many dimensions.

2. Intellectual and Practical Skills — including inquiry and analysis, the generation and evaluation of evidence and argument, critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication, quantitative literacy, information literacy, teamwork and problem solving.

3. Personal and Social Responsibility — including ethical reasoning and action, the intercultural understanding and competence to participate in a global society, civic knowledge and engagement locally as well as globally, and the lifelong habits of critical self-reflection and learning.

4. Ability to Integrate Knowledge and Skills — including synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies, bridging disciplinary and interdisciplinary thinking, and connecting the classroom and the world.

Clark’s Defining Contribution: The Capacities of Effective Practice

5. Capacities of Effective Practice — including creativity and imagination, self-directedness, resilience and persistence, and the abilities to collaborate with others across differences and to manage complexity and uncertainty.