Dear Alumni, Families and Friends,

My reading list this past summer included Jeffrey Selingo’s new book “There is Life after College: What Parents and Students Should Know About Navigating School to Prepare for the Jobs of Tomorrow.” Selingo’s main thesis is that a paradigm shift is underway in our economy that influences how students transition from college to career. College graduates face a conundrum. Students are correctly being encouraged to seek an education that promotes lifelong learning in an economy where many of the jobs of the present are not those of the future. At the same time, students are asked to “add value” immediately in their first jobs following graduation. Increasingly rare are the organizations that are willing to wait for a college graduate to build up skills “on the job.” Universities must weigh how best to meet both the long-term educational needs of our students, and how to ensure an effective launch into their first post-college careers.

The core issues raised here are ones that Clark University has been engaged with for many years. First, we have clarity on the educational outcomes we seek for our graduates. Our LEEP (Liberal Education and Effective Practice) model identifies the skills and capabilities students need to flourish in the economy of the future, and to be highly competitive in the economy of today. The great news is that a liberal education does not require students to “trade off” across these two priorities. The capacity to think critically, to engage in rigorous analysis, to approach complex problems in new and creative ways, and to work effectively as part of diverse and global teams serves both purposes. Selingo highlights six such skills: curiosity, creativity, grit, digital awareness, contextual thinking and humility.

Mindful of these changes in the economy, almost all colleges have expanded their commitment to internships, prospects for off-campus research, entrepreneurship and student career advising. Where Clark differs is that we deeply and comprehensively integrate the building of skills and capabilities into our curriculum, into course pedagogy, and into every aspect of the college experience. For us, extending learning beyond the classroom is not an add-on but a carefully designed sequence of progressively more challenging opportunities embedded in the curriculum for students. This developmental trajectory is then facilitated by a nationally recognized advising model that guides and challenges students from arrival through graduation.

The penultimate chapter in Selingo’s book is titled “How Employers Hire” and focuses specifically on the transition from college to career and graduate school. This fall, Clark University is launching our Networked Communities initiative. Networked Communities bring together current students with alumni, parents and other supporters of Clark who provide mentorship, résumé review, job shadowing, internships, career and graduate school advice, and placement opportunities. Each Networked Community focuses on a specific sector of the economy and is guided by alumni and faculty co-chairs knowledgeable about this sector. This year we are launching Networked Communities in the following areas: Biology and Biosciences, the Creative Arts, Health, Law and Regulatory Affairs, Markets and Business, and Psychology. More will follow in other areas.

Since our students seek opportunities across the country and around the world, our Networked Communities will facilitate connections through a digital platform, as well as through in-person events and meetings. Alumni, parents and other Clark friends can sign up online to serve as mentors in their professions. Students will connect with these mentors for support in their college-to-career transitions. In addition to these networking activities, the platform will include profiles of alumni active in these career fields, faculty research and other materials relevant to the skills and capabilities students will need to flourish beyond Clark.

Our Networked Communities initiative will coordinate closely with the work of the LEEP Center at Clark University. It is important that as students engage with alumni and others they are fully prepared for the expectations of the workplace. The LEEP Center is putting in place innovative programming to ensure a successful networking experience for our students and their alumni mentors.

As I travel around the country, one of the consistent themes I hear is the willingness of alumni, parents and others to support current Clark students. I invite you now to join one or more of our Networked Communities by emailing Alumni and Friends Engagement at alumni@clarku.edu. You will find the connection to current students an immensely rewarding experience that will significantly advance their success and that of Clark.

Sincerely,

David P. Angel
President