Earlier this summer my wife, Val, and daughters, Chloe (11) and Hannah (9), drove from State College, Pennsylvania, to East Lansing, so that I could begin my tenure as Dean of the College of Arts and Letters on July 1. The drive was long and the car was packed with everything I would need to begin work. When my family returned to State College after the July 4th holiday, I felt all the excitement and some of the nervousness that I recall experiencing as a freshman when I began college at Wittenberg University now almost thirty years ago.

Taking up residence in Linton Hall, and specifically, settling into the office that for so many years was occupied by Michigan State presidents, has been a real honor. Those who have worked in that office, from T.C. Abbot to John Hannah, and those former Deans of Arts and Letters, from Paul Varg to Karin Wurst, have established a tradition of academic excellence that I hope to draw upon so as to position the College as an international leader in arts and humanities research and education.

As one of Michigan State's "core colleges," the College of Arts and Letters plays an integral role in the University's mission to cultivate imaginative, innovative, and engaged citizen leaders capable of enriching the quality of life in communities at home and around the world. By educating the next generation of actors, artists, designers, filmmakers, linguists, philosophers, poets, teachers, translators, and writers, our faculty are the heart of that broader mission.

This is why increasing support for named and distinguished faculty is the first of three priorities I have established to strengthen the national and international profile of the College.

In addition to faculty support, we also need to establish the College as a leader in graduate education in the arts and humanities. Given our strengths in digital humanities and engaged, public scholarship and creative artistic work, the College is poised to lead the way in a new kind of graduate education that is at once deeply rooted in traditional arts and humanities research and creativity and equipped to address the world's most challenging social, cultural, and ethical questions.

The third priority of the College is enriching the undergraduate experience. Empowering undergraduates to chart a meaningful path for their lives is what a liberal arts education has always been about. Now more than ever that requires us to provide support for a broad range of enrichment experiences, from study abroad to international internships, and from community engagement opportunities to research collaborations with faculty. Those are the experiences that shaped and changed my life during my years as an undergraduate at Wittenberg, and they are the experiences I draw upon now as I begin my tenure as Dean of the College of Arts and Letters.

In closing, I would like to thank Dr. Elizabeth Simmons for the tremendous job she did as Acting Dean of the College of Arts and Letters. She took on this important responsibility while serving as Dean of MSU's Lyman Briggs College. Being dean of one college is a huge job; taking on two at the same time is, in a word, extraordinary. I hope to build upon her excellent work over the past year to create a culture of collaboration throughout the College. She has positioned us well for future success, and for that I thank her.

With warm regards,

Dean Christopher P. Long

For more information on Dean Long and his appointment, see page 86.