One of the things that drew me to Austin College was the palpable sense of lived mission. This is a college that cares for its members as whole people—mind, body, and spirit. Moreover, the caring isn’t parcelled out with, say, faculty paying exclusive attention to the mind and coaches caring only for the body. All members of this community see themselves as whole-person educators. It is one of the secrets to the transformative power of an Austin College education.

To help us better understand this power and communicate it more deliberately, last year Austin College engaged in an ambitious “branding” self-study. The three expressions that form the title of this letter are one result of that study—a succinct statement of the Austin College vision. We won’t be using this as any kind of a slogan—it is an internal compass—but it has been very helpful to me, as a newcomer here, to keep these phrases in the forefront of my mind as I seek to listen and learn about my new community.

We are using the self-study information to create a new Web site to serve as our virtual front door. Since the Web is the number one way that prospective students, employees, and donors learn about us, our goal is to have an online presence that does justice to the spirit and energy of our campus. We also are gearing up for a strategic planning process that will help us answer the question: How can we become ever better at engaging minds, changing lives, and transforming worlds?

This may seem like an inopportune moment for planning—we still are reeling from the economic tumble, still uncertain about will emerge as the “new normal,” and still acutely aware of our financial vulnerabilities. Some might advise us to lay low, contract, or run for cover. But this is not the Austin College way. For we are not a fair-weather college, offering opportunities to students only when it is convenient and easy. I already have had multiple opportunities to be bowled over by the generosity and commitment that our extended community provides on behalf of talented students whose families could not, without help, afford to send them to us.

I am thrilled and humbled to be the 15th president of Austin College. I look forward to our working together as we move the College forward. We will water the roots that have sustained us by investing in our strengths in the sciences, in high impact pedagogy, in global education, and in leadership development. We will place the College on firmer financial footing. We will enhance the bonds of the Austin College community. And we will move forward to make sure that our strengths are widely known.

I’ve heard it said that a college is a conversation. I am overjoyed to be joining my voice to the many others that make up the conversation that is Austin College. I invite you to contact me to share your own hopes and dreams for what we can accomplish. You can reach me by email at president@austincollege.edu.

Best,
Marjorie