

“A City Set on a Hill” – The New Ulm Campus and Its Role in WELS History

Dr. Martin Luther College established by the Minnesota Synod – 1884

- Minnesota Synod was founded in 1860 by German missionary pastors
- Aligned with Wisconsin and Missouri Synods – 1872 Synodical Conference
- Agreement to train pastors in Watertown, but could not meet financial obligation
- Concerns about sending young (high-school age) students away to Watertown or St. Louis
- By 1880s Minnesota Synod was exploring creating its own training school
- C.J. Albrecht – pastor of St. Paul’s, New Ulm, and Minnesota Synod President
- 1883 Synod Convention approved the creation of a training school after pledges of \$14,000
- Shakopee and New Ulm were location finalists
- Four-acre site on hill in New Ulm is acquired – building excavation and footings started.....
- Cornerstone laid on June 25, 1884 – dedication on November 9, 1884
- “Normal” department to educate teachers added in 1887-88
- 1892 the Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan Synods (and other states) start federation
- Began enrolling women in 1896
- Teacher training was the main purpose of college-level training at DMLC for 102 years

The “Location Question” through time

- 1884 – build in Shakopee, MN?
- 1894 – move to Saginaw, MI?
- 1908-10 – build rather in St. James or Hutchinson?
- 1917-19 – move to Watertown, WI?
- 1962 – special convention re. worker training
- 1969 – Milwaukee or New Ulm?
- 1990s – New Ulm or campus in Wisconsin?

The Presidents – listing

DMLC

- C. J. Albrecht: 1884-5
- Otto Hoyer: 1885-93
- John Schaller: 1893-1908
- Adolf Ackermann: 1908-18
 - July 25, 1917— “anti-draft” public meetings in New Ulm – Director Adolph Ackermann spoke
 - Minnesota Commission of Public Safety threatened to close the college – Ackermann resigned
- John P. Meyer: 1918-20
- Edmund Bliefert: 1920-35
- Carl Schweppe: 1935-66
- Conrad Frey: 1966-80
- Lloyd Huebner: 1980-1993
- John Lawrenz: 1993-1995

DMLHS/MLA

- O. J. Siegler: 1963-79

MLC

- Theodore Olsen: 1994-2007
- Mark Zarling: 2007-2020
- Richard Gurgel: 2020-present

Enrollment Fluctuations over time

- 1884 – 1900: between 50-100 students
- 1900 – 1920: average of 110 students
- mid-1920s: up to 260 students on campus
- mid-1930s: down to 125
- mid-1940s: up to 300
- 1955: first time over 500 (college – 211, high school – 293)
- 1979: 850 college only (high school moved to MLPS)
- 2000: 1000+ on-campus students (four straight years)
- 2025: 589 (final on-campus count)

The 1960s thru 1990s

- 1962 Special Convention at DMLC wrestled with questions:
 1. Where should synod locate teacher training?
 2. How could they improve or expand its limited, crowded facilities?
 3. How could they have a steady flow of qualified teachers?
 4. How could their school be accredited?
- Resolutions:
 1. Prepare DMLC campus for at least 500 students
 2. Separate the synodical prep schools from the colleges
 3. Revisions of curriculum and begin a program to prepare secondary teachers
 4. DMLC accredited through the University of Minnesota
- Adjustments made
 - Began to develop areas of concentration for secondary teachers
 - 1960s building boom
 - 1964 – student teachers were sent off-campus to schools in Wisconsin and other states
 - 1970 – Milwaukee Lutheran Teachers College (also called WLC) merged onto the DMLC campus
 - Football added as sport in 1971 and football bowl completed in 1974
- Blessings and Challenges
 - College enrollment topped 500 in 1966 and hit 850 by 1979
 - 1979 – Martin Luther Academy was moved from New Ulm to Prairie du Chien, WI
 - 1979 – DMLC was accredited by North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
 - By 1982 DMLC was preparing **more** teachers than could be assigned – end of the “Baby Boom” era
- 1990s Fiscal Realities
 - Combine two colleges into one? Watertown, Wisconsin? New Campus in Wisconsin? New Ulm?
 - Adjust preparatory system
 - Concerns / Benefits of Amalgamation
 - 1995 – Martin Luther College