

## Topic: Colleges and Universities Celebrate Holiday Traditions

As the time for bells, holly and gifts approaches, colleges and universities prepare for the holidays with a variety of traditions. Dances, concerts and tree lighting ceremonies fill the time between Thanksgiving and final exams, and special food is always important.

**Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa**, for example, holds an end-of-term midnight breakfast served by faculty and staff to students in the cafeteria. The breakfast is usually the Sunday night, or Monday morning, at the start of finals week during the fall term.

Faculty and staff at **Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, Pa.** serve Thanksgiving dinner to the students before the break. The president of the college carves the turkey, according to Sean Dallas, director of communications. Food service at Delaware Valley, however, includes meals on Thanksgiving Day proper and Christmas Day because many students stay on campus during the holidays to care for more than 250 farm animals. Delaware Valley College is one of the few private colleges in the nation with a heavy emphasis on agriculture.

Take-out has become a tradition at **Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas.** TCU's Dining Services catering department provides a variety of foods for the holidays. Students order brownie trays or fruit and vegetable trays around Christmas time for study groups or graduation parties. Even uncooked meats, such as steaks or chicken breasts, are available for purchase by students to take home or keep in their houses near campus. And orders pick up at holiday time, reports Katheryn Carter, catering director at TCU.

Beyond food, Christmas concerts tend to be the oldest traditions at many colleges.

Wartburg College will celebrate its 61<sup>st</sup> anniversary of "Christmas with Wartburg" this year. The event is a four-concert series featuring talents of the Wartburg Choir, Castle Singers and Wind Ensemble. Last year, about 350 student musicians performed and approximately 7,000 people attended the concerts.

**Hope College in Holland, Mich.** celebrates the holidays with a worship service known as Christmas Vespers. The college will hold its 68<sup>th</sup> service this December and will feature mainly Christmas hymns performed by the Chorus, Chapel Choir, Symphonette and the flute choir and brass ensemble. Four services are held per year with more than 4,000 attendees.

The Festival of Lessons and Carols at **Sewanee: The University of the South in Sewanee, Tenn.**, is an annual service opened to the public. The University Choir sings carols appropriate to the season of Advent and Christmas after the reading of each lesson. Laurie Saxton, Director of Media Relations, says the All Saints' Chapel for the festival has become an event in itself with help from students and community members. The Chapel is decorated with red poinsettias in memory of loved ones and greens from the University forest.

Tree lightings are popular at many schools. TCU gets in the holiday spirit by hosting a tree lighting ceremony, which includes a nightly light show. A toy drive is sponsored and gifts are collected from students.

Faculty, staff and students from **Messiah College in Grantham, Pa.** also gather for the lighting of the Christmas tree. Various people contribute through readings, prayers and songs.

**Albright College in Reading, Pa.** also celebrates with a ceremonial tree lighting service. A holiday party is provided for all employees, the Alumni Association holds an open house and the president has parties at his home for community leaders and donors.

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Dick Jones Communications helps these schools with their national public affairs work.