After more than 30 years in education, President Neil D. Theobald finds himself back where he began, standing in front of a classroom of students. But the onetime high school teacher is now leading a freshman seminar in organizational change. And he is serving up the lessons he has acquired during his first year as Temple’s 10th president.

Since arriving at Temple in January 2013, Theobald has spearheaded dynamic changes across the 130-year-old university, from overhauling Temple’s budget process; to hiring 54 new faculty members, a new provost, five new deans and three new vice presidents; to developing a clear vision that will define Temple’s future.

Those changes have led to record-breaking admissions, fundraising and research milestones over the past year. There also are many initiatives on the horizon, including bold strategies to reduce student debt and a new campus master plan.

The wait-and-see approach? Not for this first-time president. With year one of his tenure in the books, Theobald has a robust body of achievements to look back on, and much he hopes to achieve in 2014 and beyond.

“I am privileged to be the president of Temple University, a role I am enjoying tremendously,” he says. “As good as Temple is, though, we have to get better—we must strive to improve continually.”

MILESTONES

The results of Theobald’s first year speak for themselves. At the beginning of the 2013–2014 academic year, Temple welcomed its most ever academically qualified class of new freshmen and transfer students. Its average SAT score (1129) was 20 points higher than last year’s average and nearly 140 points higher than the most recent Pennsylvania average. In addition, more than 500 freshmen joined the Temple Honors Program.

In keeping with Temple’s history, the new class also grew in diversity. The number of African-American undergraduates increased by 7 percent, while the number of new
 último en uno con estudiantes, personal del personal del personal, y los alumnos. Theobald espera que se dé un mejor entendimiento de la importancia del servicio al alumno. Los alumnos serán los que decidan el futuro de Temple.

One on one with students, staff, faculty and alumni, Theobald hopes to gain a better understanding of the needs of the university. Freshmen enrolled in Theobald’s class will have the opportunity to assume leadership positions during their remaining three years at Temple.

Theobald congratulates the 2013 Homecoming Queen, Jan Inhak-Walker, Class of 2014, during the Homecoming festivities in October.

Theobald has many more changes planned for Temple. A campus master plan incorporating input from students, faculty, staff and alumni is on the slate for 2014. One component of the plan—a new library in the heart of Main Campus—is scheduled to be completed in 2018.

In January, Theobald unveiled Fly in 4, a partnership between students and the university that will provide incoming freshmen with the tools and incentives they need to graduate on time. That initiative will launch in the fall.

“Talking longer than four years to graduate can add tens of thousands of dollars in debt. It also delays a student’s entry into the higher paying, college-educated segment of the workforce,” Theobald says. “Fly in 4 gives students who commit to graduating on time the ability to reduce their debt and advance more quickly into careers that will allow them to pay off the debt they do acquire. Our students must not keep their futures waiting.”

Looking Ahead
Not all the changes Theobald has overseen have been easy. In December, the university announced it will reduce its number of varsity sports from 24 to 19 at the end of this academic year. That reduction will put Temple in line with the number of teams supported by other universities in the American Athletic Conference. The athletics cuts also were a part of a national trend of universities reducing their sports programs in a period of financial strain in higher education.

“It was an extremely difficult decision,” Theobald says, noting that student-athletes on the affected teams will retain their scholarships, and the university will help them transfer if they choose to do so.

He always asks us about things going on around campus and tells us how helpful it is to have students’ opinions when he’s making decisions for the university.”

—CAROLINE HOUSSEL, CLASS OF 2017

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CAPITAL IDEAS

When President Neil D. Theobald traveled to Harrisburg, Pa., in February to make Temple’s annual appeal for state support, he was met with praise from state-elected officials for Fly in 4 and Temple’s 20/20 Scholarships. The latter program helps residents from neighborhoods surrounding the university pay for a Temple education.

State Sen. Patricia Vance remarked that she was “impressed by the Fly in 4 Initiative.”

Rep. Cherie Packer commended Theobald for his efforts to keep Temple accessible and affordable. “(What [Temple] is doing with Fly in 4) will help to ensure that people will have access to a quality higher education, whether or not they were born into a wealthy family,” Packer said.

Theobald told senators the goal of Fly in 4 is to help students graduate on time by providing assistance when needed and relaxing the burden of working excessive hours at outside jobs, thus reducing their college debts.

State Sen. Jake Corman, chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, highlighted the growing commitment Temple has made to the city of Philadelphia through programs such as the 20/20 Scholarships. “Thirty years ago, Temple was a commuter school,” Corman said. “Today, (it) has become a residential school that is fully engaged with the community.”