

Good afternoon, and thank you for being here today! As you well know, one of the purposes of the annual Fall Faculty/Staff Convocation is for me to provide a brief overview of the state of the University. This is my eleventh Convocation at Drake, and the story just keeps getting better and better every year – and that is a tribute to the commitment, energy, passion and hard work of everyone in this room, of all of our faculty, staff, Board members and other volunteers.

I have three points that I'd like you to come away with this afternoon:

- We have just had a great year; in the face of historic economic and social challenges, Drake University has continued to thrive and to improve in the context of great uncertainty;
- My second point is that it's not over yet – not by a long shot, and that we must continue to be as vigilant as ever, as meticulous as ever in identifying and evaluating changing conditions, and we must continue to ensure that we are doing everything that we do as efficiently and effectively as possible;
- Finally, I want to talk a little bit about our future – about where we're going and what we need to do to get there; what I think we need to do to ensure that we are keeping the promise of Drake's mission to our students for decades to come.

We have just concluded an academic year characterized by a great deal of anxiety about the ways in which the global economic collapse would affect the University's finances, affect our students and their parents, affect all of us in our personal and family situations. It has been a year in which our colleagues in many colleges and universities across the country have been faced with budget cuts that damage the very fabric of their institutions, marked by layoffs, salary reductions, hiring freezes and other painful initiatives. We had reason to be nervous for the past year, but we also had good reason to be confident that we could ride out the storm without significant damage to the University-or its people.

The reasons for that confidence were several. All of our strategic planning over the past decade has been focused not only on continuous improvement of our exceptional learning environment, but on creating an institution that is resilient, stable, flexible and responsive – an institution that is capable of anticipating and not only *responding* to changes in our environment, but of *managing* those changes to our advantage. Thanks to what we've collectively accomplished, and to our strategic approach to scenario planning throughout the year, we have been – and continue to be – in a strong position to manage the uncertainty of our external environment.

In addition, as an institution dependent on tuition income for the largest portion of our operating budget, it was essential that we meet our enrollment and financial aid goals. The fact that we were able to meet our EFR target (while maintaining the academic profile – even a slight increase in the median gpa!), to exceed our transfer target by

almost 30%, and to achieve a record 89.36% first-to-second-year retention rate is compelling testimony to several things: 1) that despite the environment, Drake continues to be a highly-desirable educational experience for the best students; 2) that Tom Delahunt and the admissions and financial aid staff continue to do a superb job in connecting the right students with Drake; 3) that the entire campus – faculty and staff – stepped up last year to unprecedented levels to participate in enrolling this class, and; 4) that with a nearly 90% retention rate that puts us in the top 10% of all 4-year institutions nationally, we are keeping the promise of Drake’s mission to our students – that retention rate is a consequence of the efforts of every person on this campus to keep that promise.

Having met our enrollment and financial aid targets, I am delighted to share with you the information I know you’ve all been waiting for: we have actually *exceeded* the criteria for the “likely case” scenario, and as a result have made available a salary increase pool for this year of \$1.5 million dollars – a figure somewhat less than what we’ve done in the past several years. But for those of you with good memories, it’s a half-million dollars more than the “likely scenario” accounted for! Given that 2/3 of the colleges and universities reporting in a recent survey indicated that salaries were either frozen or reduced this year, we are privileged indeed to be in a position to continue to fulfill our commitment to equitable and competitive compensation at Drake.

Let me share with you, in more staccato form and semi-random order, some of the other exciting indicators of a great year at Drake University:

- We finished the FY09 fiscal year with a modest budget surplus for the fifth year in a row; the funds were used to meet our obligation to the Perkins Loan Program, and for several facilities projects
- Our tuition increase of 2.99% for this year was the lowest in a decade, and reflective of our commitment to do everything that we can to make a Drake education affordable for our students and their parents
- For the second year in a row, Drake University was ranked in the top ten among mid-sized universities nationally in the *Chronicle of Higher Education’s* “Great Schools to Work For” survey – this time in 8 categories!
- In this year’s *U.S. News & World Report* rankings, we improved our standing in several ways, but much more interesting was our score for “reputation for academic quality,” a score derived from a survey sent to the presidents, provosts and dean or vice president for admissions at all participating institutions asking us to rate the schools in our category (in our case, master’s universities) for academic quality. When Rachel Boon looked at the raw data for that survey result, we found that out of the 584 master’s universities across the country that participated in the survey, *only 3 had a higher reputational score than Drake!* Our goal, as expressed in *Vision 2012*, to be – and to be recognized – as one of the best institutions of higher education in the country, was obviously not out of reach!

- In a year in which the pundits predicted anywhere from a 15% to a 30% decline in annual giving to colleges and universities, the Drake Fund came within \$100,000 dollars of our target, bringing in over \$3 million.
- Even in this difficult financial environment, we continue to make progress with *Distinctly Drake*, our campaign to fund Drake's future, including two new endowed professorships: the Fred & Patty Turner Professorship in Jazz Studies, and the Fisher/Stelter Professorship in Journalism.
- We hired a new provost, two new deans and, just recently, a new executive director of marketing and communications
- We strengthened our capacity to meet our mission goals regarding global and international education with the appointment of Ron Troyer as senior counselor for international initiatives
- We continue to be one of the top producers of Fulbrights Scholarships among master's institutions nationally, with three students and one faculty member receiving Fulbrights for research or teaching abroad-for this year.
- Academic All-American women's basketball player Lindsay Whorton became the first Rhodes Scholar from Drake since the 1920s
- More than 50 of our student/athletes received conference recognition for their academic achievements
- We added four new Trustees whose experience, expertise and stature are important additions to an already strong Board of Trustees
- *National Jurist Magazine* once again identified the Drake Law School as a "best value," rating us 6th in the country among private law schools
- We completed several important campus beautification projects – the 28th Street Plaza and the Painted Street project, the exterior of Cole Hall, removal of the hedges along University and 25th Street, the repaving of the Olmsted parking lot and the renovation of the Cartwright Hall plaza
- We celebrated – in grand style – the 100th running of the Drake Relays
- Drake's mock trial team took first place at the Harvard Crimson Classic
- Finally (and there's much more to tell, but not enough time...), nearly 200 faculty, staff, students and Board members participated in Futures Conference I in June, beginning what will be an ongoing discussion this year about transformational change at Drake.

And that brings me to my second point: we should all take a great deal of pride and satisfaction in what we've collectively accomplished in the past year. But we cannot afford to be complacent, to relax, thinking that we're "there" (wherever "there" might actually be). As I've said in the past, we will always operate in a dynamic, ever-changing environment in which stasis, a failure to move forward, is a formula for disaster. The past 18 months have brought challenges and obstacles that serve to confirm our commitment to strategic change that is grounded in information, in data, in

reliable as possible assumptions about the future, and in careful, informed scenario planning that enables us to manage uncertainty.

I also have always believed that universities have an obligation to be places of “healthy dissatisfaction.” Students come to us because they don’t yet know what they want to know, or think they need to know; we as faculty and staff are committed to professional development and research because we don’t know or understand as much as we want to about things that are important to us, and because we think that there might be better ways of knowing what we know. And, quite frankly, I hope that our graduates go into the world with a sense of healthy dissatisfaction – with the recognition that the world in which we live is broken in all kinds of frightening ways, and with the commitment to do something about it. It is my contention, then, that we need to constantly apply that ethos of “healthy dissatisfaction” to the very fabric of Drake University – *no matter how good we are at being Drake, no matter how good we are at keeping the promise of our mission, we know that we can do better, and we want to do better.*

And that brings me to my final point – the focus of the upcoming Futures Conference II on October 30th, and the campus-wide discussion that I hope we will have in coming months. *It is essential, as we look at ourselves and we look at our future, that we understand that “business as usual,” no matter how well we do it, is not a viable strategy for long-term vitality, relevance and even survival.*

I do not in any way want to minimize the magnitude of the things that we have accomplished together. But as I said in my introduction to Futures Conference I in June, we have become very, very good – *exceptionally* good – at doing fundamentally the *same* things that we’ve been doing for a century. We have improved *dramatically* in all kinds of ways that have enabled us to keep the promise of our mission to our students, but our improvements have been *incremental*; they have certainly been *qualitative* improvements, but not – for the most part – *transformational*.

Every week brings new articles – in the popular press and in the higher education press – and every month seems to bring a new monograph, all focusing on the many ways in which the current model for higher education is doomed because – like the recording, broadcast and newspaper industries before us, we are not paying attention to the tectonic shifts in our environment and we are not fundamentally rethinking our business model (their term – not mine!) – we are not thinking about *transformational change*.

While many of these pieces are characterized by the hyperbole and intent to polarize typical of today’s public discourse, that fact is that demographic, technological, economic, social and workforce changes do indeed demand that we step back and think about what we do and how we do it.

I would ask you to be open-minded and broad in your thinking as our discussions about Drake's future continue – to *think* about *transformational* change, recognizing that whether we like it or not, if Drake University in ten years looks exactly like it does today, it will be an irrelevant historical artifact – not the vibrant, vital model for the best in higher education that we are today, a Drake University to which we have all committed ourselves.

Before I turn the podium over to Faculty Senate President Phil Houle, let me close on a very personal note: Maddy and I celebrated 10 years at Drake this past May, and we want to thank you all for the support, guidance, encouragement and friendship that you have so generously afforded us. It is a privilege and a great joy to be part of the Drake family.