

Good afternoon, and welcome to the 2011 Faculty/Staff Convocation. While we've been underway for several weeks now, we still have the excitement unique to the world of academia every fall—the excitement of new beginnings, new faces, new goals, aspirations and dreams. And at Drake University, in contrast, sadly, to most of our colleagues in higher education around the country, it is also a time to celebrate what we have accomplished as a community thus far, thanks to the collective and sustained efforts of all of you in this room, of our faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends.

The Fall Convocation serves as a formal vehicle for us to come together to share our excitement about what we have accomplished and what we plan to do,

but I hope that that excitement will continue to pervade our collective experience on a daily basis as we go forward.

Following a recently-established tradition that seems to have been very well-received, I'm now going to turn the podium over to my colleagues on the President's Cabinet, who will share some of their thoughts with you – and I'll be back up here in a while. I'm pleased to introduce a friend and colleague, president of the Faculty Senate, Prof. LouAnn Simpson.

Thank you, John, and thanks to all of you for your comments. As the “closer” for this portion of the program, I'd like to share two topics with you: first,

to give you a sense of the big things on *my* agenda for this year – the things that will require the greatest amount of my attention and focus. You’ll notice—not surprisingly—that they’re on the agendas of my colleagues in the Cabinet as well. Second, to expand a bit outside the focus of our campus, and provide an overview of some of the major challenges that characterize the environment in which we will be operating—challenges that we will have to manage, and exploit where possible, as we go forward.

The major issues on which my efforts will be focused this year are the *distinctly*Drake campaign; the two Vice Presidential level searches; the strategic planning process; implementation of the curriculum review decisions, and; campus communications.

The biggest item on my agenda in terms of time commitment is the *distinctly*Drake campaign. As in the past two years, it will require 65-70% of my time—not just on the road hosting campaign functions and asking people for their support, but regular participation in campaign strategy meetings, prospect evaluation sessions and so on.

As John has noted, we can both celebrate the success of having raised nearly \$100 million in the midst of a global financial crisis, and recognize the challenge of continuing that success in the face of continuing economic uncertainty. We know it's going to be hard—and we know that we can do it.

For those of you who haven't had experience in fundraising, I can tell you that in this case it's

actually mostly a great deal of fun and tremendously rewarding. The conversations that I have with prospective donors are not mostly about *money* (although that figures into the conversation at some point, of course). The conversations are about *Drake*, about their experiences at Drake, their love for their University, and their passions. The conversations are about our wonderful aspirations for the University, and the ways in which we can easily connect our aspirations to the things that they—as alumni and friends—care about. “Their” Drake University holds an important place in their hearts, and “our” Drake University is a very easy place to talk about with sincere excitement and passion.

Second on the list is the fact that we are in the midst of conducting two national searches for senior

administrative positions – provost and vice president for business & finance. I have been reporting to the campus on a fairly regular basis on the progress of those two searches, so I will not repeat myself here. But I do want to reiterate that I am confident that we will be able to identify two people who are just right for Drake University, and who will be here for the long term. Our national stature as one of the top master's universities in the country, our robust financial and admissions profiles and the fact that we are—thanks to you all—a wonderful group of people to work with give us every reason to believe that we will have very competitive pools for both positions.

Third, as Sue has mentioned, we are in the early stages of the process that will lead to Drake

University's next strategic plan. I am very pleased that Raylene Rospond, Keith Summerville and Ron Troyer have agreed to serve as the planning troika for this process, and look forward to the election of the Planning Council in November. I am also extremely encouraged by the participation in the discussions that the troika has been holding to discuss our vision of Drake's future and the challenges that we face in making that vision a reality. At last count, over 170 faculty and staff have participated or are signed up to participate in coming weeks—that is a very, very encouraging sign. I can assure you that as this process goes forward it will be carried out in the same manner that the development of previous plans has been carried out, with a strong emphasis on transparency,

engagement of all campus constituencies, and a commitment to our core values and mission.

Fourth, implementation of the curriculum decisions made last year by the Faculty Senate are a major item on my agenda as well. I am personally very pleased by the results of last year's decisions, and I am confident that their implementation will have a significant effect on the exceptional learning environment that we promise our students in *Drake's Mission Statement*. While the actual implementation of these decisions is, for the most part, the province of the faculty and the leadership of the academic division, I want to ensure that we in the University administration are doing everything necessary to ensure that the process of

implementation has all of the support that is needed, and that it is successful.

Last – and certainly not least – is the issue of campus communications – a topic that I have addressed in several emails to the campus in recent months. I want to acknowledge that we have some work to do in this area—ranging from ensuring that the campus is informed on a continual basis about issues of interest and importance to making sure that we are all hearing each other’s voices in useful and appropriate ways, particularly when decisions that affect most of us on campus are being considered. We recognize that as a vitally important issue, and the President’s Cabinet, Deans’ Council, Marketing & Communications and others have been for some time now in the development of communications

strategies that will strengthen our bonds as a community. Needless to say, I welcome your input on this issue (and on any other issue, for that matter) as we go forward.

As we look ahead, particularly as we consider our vision for Drake's future and the strategic planning process that will make that vision a reality, we have to recognize that there are a variety of challenges that we must confront, manage and—where possible—exploit to the University's advantage in keeping the promise of our mission.

Those challenges are many, and they are considerable. I am not going to try your patience by reciting a litany of them here – I've listed nearly 5 pages of them in bulleted form on *BlueView* as part

of the planning process, and if you haven't reviewed them yet, I'd encourage you to do so.

Rather than take you through the list unnecessarily, I'm going to make what might seem to be an overly dramatic and hyperbolic statement, but I assure you that it's both sincere and not in the least exaggerated: *higher education in America is at a watershed moment.* I'm tempted to even say that we are in crisis. We are collectively at a moment in which the decisions that we make in the next few years will determine whether or not we regain our status as the best and most accessible system of higher education in the world, or if we will become fragmented, ineffective and inaccessible.

Let me emphasize that by “we,” I mean those of us in higher education, policy-makers at the state and national level, and ultimately the public at large.

In that context, let me identify three of the major challenges that we must resolve:

- In the past 10-15 years, both the general public and policy-makers have come to see a college education as a *private* good, not a *public* good. We are a nation that created the liberal arts college in Colonial America to graduate students to lead our communities; that passed the Morrill Land Grant Act in the middle of a Civil War, creating great public universities in recognition of the country’s need for an educated citizenry to drive the industrial and agricultural revolutions; a country that passed the GI Bill in the aftermath of World

War II and the National Education Defense Act following the launch of Sputnik—all of these great initiatives deriving from a fundamental belief in higher education as a public good—that we needed a highly-educated people for economic prosperity, effective self-governance and cultural vitality.

In the past decade or so, we have seen a dramatic erosion of this belief, of a shift toward the notion of higher education as a *private* good for which each individual—not the federal government or the states—is responsible. This shift—as evidenced in data from public opinion polls, the dramatic decrease in financial support for state universities and the periodic assaults by the U.S. Congress on federal financial assistance

programs—this shift, if it continues, may change the face of higher education in ways that none of us here today would find appropriate. This challenge is exacerbated by the fact that as the real income of the middle class erodes, as the ranks of the economic underclass grow, and as the capacity of public institutions—particularly community colleges—is constrained by lack of resources, higher education in America is becoming *less* accessible, not more.

- Second, we have to recognize that the financial turmoil that began 3 years ago will have long-lasting effects on our institutions, on our students and their parents, and on those on whom we count for philanthropy. While we all wait impatiently for an end to the current situation, we

must recognize that whatever the end looks like, it will not look like our world did before the recession. As the pundits have said, the new normal isn't going to look anything like the old normal. Without going into detail at this point, suffice it to say that those of us charged with shaping the future of this University—that is, in some sense, all of us—must ensure that we design a future that enables the University to thrive in a very different financial environment.

- Last – and not only not least, but perhaps the most important—is that we, the national higher education community, are not yet prepared to do a good job of educating the students who are almost on our door step, for a variety of reasons. As one of my colleagues put it in a presidential

roundtable of which I was a part last year, “we are structured for the students that we used to have, not for the students we are going to have.”

In another conversation of which I was a part, a discussion among members of the Board of Directors of the American Council on Education, Bob Johansen, one of the founding members of the Institute for the Future in Santa Monica said something that I will try to paraphrase accurately: “the coming generations of students have been acquiring knowledge in much different ways than we have in the past, with instantaneous access to information through a variety of screens – often since they were only 2 or 3 years old. They are literally wired differently – their cognitive

processes are different, and *we are not ready for them.*”

In this context, we also have to recognize that the current model for higher education – which, at least structurally—is several centuries old, and is predicated on a set of assumptions about who our students are and what our tasks as educators are. To put it somewhat crudely, but accurately, the fundamental assumption since the 18th century in America has been that 18 year-old minds are fully formed, and the job of higher education is to open the lids on top of their heads, pour knowledge in, and send them on their way as adults (I know that’s not the way in which we look at it at Drake – I hope! – but higher education’s core structures of courses, credits and the traditional nature of

student/faculty interaction are predicated on that assumption).

Cognitive neuroscience tells us that not only are 18 year-old minds not fully developed, but that our brains continue to develop throughout our lifetime. Even more important is the fact that we now know that *how* our students learn, not just *what* they learn, has a powerful impact in shaping their cognitive development. The implications of that knowledge have tremendous meaning, particularly for us as we embark on the strategic planning process and the shaping of Drake's future.

Those findings tell us that the nature of the learning environments that we create for our students, the kinds of learning tasks that we set

before them, the ways in which we both challenge and support them, will literally shape the development of their brains, of their cognitive capacities and abilities.

I suspect that a lot of you have known that all along, and have designed your teaching and learning strategies accordingly – but we need to recognize this knowledge formally and account for it in the ways in which we create the Drake University of the next decade. I sincerely hope that we will keep these things in mind as we craft our vision of Drake's future, and develop the strategic plan that will get us there.

As daunting and complex as these challenges may seem, we at Drake have every reason to be both

excited and optimistic. We face them from a position of strength, as defined by many of the things you've heard today:

- Financial stability and budgetary integrity
- Extremely strong enrollment demand
- National stature as one of the best master's institutions in the country—stature that enables us to attract remarkable faculty and staff
- The enthusiastic support of our alumni, friends and the community
- A pervasive commitment to our students, and to the promise of our mission
- A decade-long history of strategic planning that has shaped our present and positioned us to manage our future—in essence, an

impressive track record of accomplishing what we set out to accomplish

- And finally, all of you – faculty and staff— whose tireless engagement with the work of the University, and with our students, gives us the most powerful reason to believe in the vitality of our future

So, in closing, I want to express my profound thanks to you for two things: one, for all that you do to make Drake an exceptional learning environment in which our students discover their dreams for themselves and set off on their way fully prepared to make those dreams come true; second, as Maddy and I begin our thirteenth year at Drake, we thank you once again for the privilege of being part of the

Drake family, and for your friendship, support and encouragement.

I now have the pleasure of introducing a good friend and colleague, Assistant Vice President and Director of Human Resources, Venessa Macro, to bestow the Levitt Awards for Community Service and Employee Excellence.