

## **Installation – April 2, 2008**

Chancellor Nordenberg, Provost Maher, Vice Provost Pack, Members of the Board of Trustees, Members of the Advisory Board, Delegates from other schools, colleges, and campuses of the University; Delegates from our sister institutions; Members of the Faculty and Staff, students, alumni, family, friends, and honored guests:

Thank you all for coming here to share in the joy of this special day.

I want to give special thanks to a number of people and organizations:

- To the Installation Committee: Ms. Jodi Kraisinger, chair, and members Dr. Lillian Beeson, Ms. Dolly Biskup, Dr. Kerry Holzworth, Ms. Laura Lucas, Ms. Wendy Mackall, Dr. Norman Scanlon, and Mr. Aaron Slafka who planned these celebrations.
- To Dr. Nathan Bowers, the Pitt-Greensburg Chorale, and soloists Courtney Hill and Deidre Stuffer , accompanist Rhonda Dunn, and the Laurel Brass Quintet for the lovely music they have brought to these ceremonies.
- To our marshals – Dr. Lillian Beeson, Ms. Carol Calloway, Prof. Steven Murabito, Dr. Walt Orange, and Prof. Judy Vollmer – and our Presidential ambassadors who provide guidance and order to the ceremonies.

- to the Chartwells organization who is sponsoring today's delightful lunch and reception;
- to the volunteers – both students and staff – who have made this celebration possible;
- to Thomas Tierney, the composer of *Eleanor*, who wrote special lyrics for his lovely song “Give” to make them even more appropriate for this ceremony. Although Tom and his wife Maureen cannot be here today, they share my vision for the role of higher education in this world; and
- to my family – my mother, who, for health reasons, could not be here today, my late father, and my brother and sister-in-law – who have been a constant source of encouragement and inspiration.

I would like to begin these remarks with a public statement of my gratitude and joy in being given the opportunity to lead this extraordinary institution.

This is a time of rapid change -- on this campus, in the nation, and in the world. As the songs that opened this celebration suggested, change can be an exhilarating journey and an exciting adventure as we “Open a New Window . . . Travel a New Highway” all the more once we realize the change is in our hands and “It’s Today.” But before seizing those

opportunities and racing forward, it is wise to remember the advice of the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu who cautions that

Those who talk of making changes but do not first take time to see how matters stand now have nothing to build on, and their efforts usually fail . . . A sound leader pursues change carefully . . . <sup>1</sup>

For, as the philosopher suggests, sound leadership requires care to **blend** the old with the new.

This occasion of the installation of a new President provides the time to reflect on the unique identity of this institution, to appreciate what all of us bring to this university, and to consider the future that awaits it.

Now in its 45<sup>th</sup> year of existence, the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg, is firmly established as a place committed to civility, integrity, mutual respect, self-restraint, and concern for others, where students thrive as individuals, where they can blossom as they advance their own learning and share a journey of new scholarly discoveries with their faculty.

As part of the 221-year-old University of Pittsburgh, Pitt-Greensburg is uniquely positioned to be simultaneously small and large, to focus on the individual but draw from the resources of one of the world's great research universities.

Our commitment to higher education preceded our existence as a nation. From our earliest colonial days, quality higher education has been a public value. The nature of that education and the audience to whom it has been directed have changed over the succeeding years, just as our nation itself has changed. We would expect this evolution for, as Harold Shapiro, the former president of Princeton University, has noted “the philosophy of a liberal arts education presumes learning experiences that enable citizens to understand their interrelated social, moral, and professional responsibilities. . . a liberal education is directly connected to the nature of the society we wish to sustain. . . . It is not simply what we teach, or even what our students learn, but what kind of persons they become that really matters.”<sup>2</sup>

Our nation’s founders recognized that a vision of limitless individual opportunity was hollow without a commitment to enhancing the capacity of each individual to contribute. Education enables each person to realize the opportunities available in a free society and at the same time it helps to sustain the institutions that promote those freedoms. What kind of people do we want our students to become in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? I believe we want our students able to discern value in both the experiences of the past and the prospects in the present. We want them prepared to face the challenges of

the future, equipped with skills they will need to embrace the opportunities that await them.

Higher education has never been more important than it is today. It serves three equally vital roles:

### **Investing in People**

Over thirty years ago, Nobel laureates Theodore Schultz and Gary Becker described education as an investment in human capital comparable in its ability to yield returns to investments in other forms of capital. The concept of human capital was born. Today it is an integral part of our everyday discussions of the reasons why education is important. Education not only facilitates individuals' employability and supports a rising standard of living but it also makes future investments easier. We all stand on the shoulders of those who came before us in the intellectual enterprise. Today the advance of knowledge seems to be accelerating and sustained investments in people are especially important. People's skills are increasingly recognized as among the most important drivers of economic progress. In this information age any stability an individual realizes is a function of his or her own skills and not a consequence of the characteristics of his or her employer. These are the so-called "knowledge" workers of the twenty-first century. The

nature of work and the influence of social structures have been changing dramatically, transformed by a variety of interactive influences:

- Regulatory change which breaks down restrictive barriers and opens formerly protected markets and societies;
- New competition, often global in nature, which demands that organizations meet world standards; and
- Technological change which both transmits the impact of other influences more rapidly over greater distances and alters the nature of work or introduces whole new lines of business while making others obsolete.

Today's careers emphasize the knowledge, skills, and reputation of the individual: success is linked to a person's own skills. The individual has the responsibility to acquire those skills in the first place and to keep them up to date. This suggests a society dedicated to the idea of continuous learning and ready to reinvent itself to keep pace with change. Education is more important than ever before to equip people for increasingly complex jobs at the beginning of their careers but it is equally important to facilitate their lifelong learning as they maintain their employability.

### **Enriching Lives**

A second and equally important role for higher education arises in the ways it enriches peoples' lives and enhances the communities in which they live. The breadth and depth of subjects – from archeology to philosophy, from art to physics, from literature to mathematics – expands their understanding of the world around them and awakens their imagination to what it might be. It deepens their perspective on what each person can achieve and what responsibilities come with that achievement. As learning is advanced among students, it also invigorates the communities in which they study. Education provides the prose that will make our students employable and the poetry that will light up their lives.

### **Informing Citizens**

A third function of higher education that flows from the second but has distinct importance is its role in fostering an educated citizenry, as this is critical to a functioning democracy. In 1765, John Adams maintained that “liberty cannot be preserved without general knowledge among the people who have the right to that knowledge and the desire to know.”<sup>3</sup> Fostering an educated citizenry says a great deal about the kind of society we want to sustain. Indeed Thomas Jefferson concurred with Adams and observed that “anyone who expects a country to be ignorant and free expects something that never was and never will be.”<sup>4</sup> When we acknowledge our nation's role

in the world, we realize that our citizens more than ever before need the knowledge and discernment to make informed judgments on issues that can have universal impact.

In meeting these challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Pitt-Greensburg has special strengths. It is a place where students are known and nurtured as individuals by their faculty. Students can open new windows and explore the panoramas they offer with the encouragement and support of faculty and staff. This environment can be transformational in its impacts on everyone's lives – especially the students but also the faculty and indeed all members of the university community; good teachers learn from their students. The excitement of the process, when done well, is infectious. It creates opportunities for everyone.

Recent research by Flavio Cunha and Nobel laureate James Heckman has considered some of the under-recognized factors that influence human skill development.<sup>5</sup> Certainly cognitive abilities play a strong part in skill development over a lifetime, but others matter, too, and in some cases they may well be even more important. Noncognitive abilities such as perseverance, motivation, self-esteem, and self-control play an important role in who we become. Cunha and Heckman note that the traditional distinction between nature and nurture is obsolete, as behaviors and abilities

interact in complex ways and have both a genetic and an acquired character.<sup>6</sup>

Based on research from a variety of sources, they demonstrate that remediation at early ages can reduce ability gaps that are observed across different socioeconomic groups. Indeed even cognitive skills appear to be malleable at early ages, as IQ scores do not stabilize until around age 10.<sup>7</sup>

In the brief time I have been here, I can see that the personal attention that is a hallmark of the Pitt-Greensburg experience plays an analogous role for students at older ages. While their cognitive abilities are set by the time students come here, the non-cognitive skills that enable them to fully realize their intellectual powers can be nurtured. Through experiences inside and out of the classroom and the lab, our students can confidently explore and develop their interests and abilities. Lao-Tzu reminds us that each individual is unique; just as there are no identical fingerprints or snowflakes, no two people are the same.<sup>8</sup> Each Pitt-Greensburg student can form a unique portfolio of investments. Our students leave with enhanced human capital and so much more. The process of learning – blending cognitive development with a recognition of the importance of a nurturing environment allows them to begin a lifelong journey of learning. If we are to help create the society we wish to sustain, it is vital that we enable our students to become all they want to and can be, while recognizing the

responsibilities that come with learning. In the special words of the song

“Give”

Open your eyes; there’s need in the air; hands reaching out for  
someone to care.

We do care, and caring for our students, we change their lives, and through  
them, the world is transformed.

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley M. Herman, *The Tao at Work On Leading and Following* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc. Publishers, 1994), p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Harold T. Shapiro, *A Larger Sense of Purpose Higher Education and Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 89-90.

<sup>3</sup> David McCullough, “Character Above All,” Volume Two, audio lectures recorded 1996, edited by Robert A. Wilson.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Flavio Cunha and James Heckman, “The Technology of Skill Formation,” *American Economic Review Papers and Proceedings* (May 2007), pp. 31-47.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>8</sup> Herman, p. 52.