

## **FELLOWS DAY 2008: Remarks**

Saturday, September 6, 2008

Good evening and welcome back. It's good to have all of you with us as we express a very big "Thank You" to each and every one of you for the annual support, financial and otherwise, that you bring to this college community. A huge thank you to the entire Institutional Advancement staff, particularly Lee Martin, for their organization of this event. I also want to add my thanks to Aramark, who always do a fantastic job with our food service. To use a Buccigross expression "Winner, winner, chicken dinner".

Well, well ... it's been an interesting summer here at the 'Berg. As you know, this college bid farewell to our 13<sup>th</sup> president, Dominic Dottavio, and his wife, Lisette, after five years of extraordinary leadership to not only our campus community but to the broader Tiffin community as well. Collectively, we owe a great deal to this couple as they very much stabilized this institution and then subsequently provided the vision and framework we so desperately needed, which has resulted in the many achievements we are realizing today. They're sweating in 100-degree heat down in Texas, but how about a round of applause for Dominic and Lisette?

As the saying goes, "Life must go on" and so must this institution. Enter yours truly! On July 1, I humbly began my service as your interim president and after nearly two and a half months, I am pleased to report that the college is still standing! No staged coups. No revolts. At least not yet. For me, this summer has been about transition. A new job. A new office. New perspective. And yes, new headaches. Don't get me wrong, as the vice president and dean of

students here for nearly seven years, I certainly had headaches (some of which I can write a book about), but my headaches, or should I say *challenges* I now face, are steeped in 158 years of tradition, legendary institutional leadership, and a stewardship of responsibility that I am still attempting to absorb. Thirteen-thousand alumni, current students, faculty, staff, the Board of Trustees, parents, local city officials ...

The constituent list that is served by College leadership is lengthy, to be sure. I want you to know that I embrace this responsibility and intend to lead in the only way I know how: work hard, work smart, and utilize Heidelberg's greatest resource: its people.

As I shared with our college community back on June 30<sup>th</sup>, the day before taking office, I would embark on this new experience with my ears perked, my eyes wide open, and my hands ready to do the work of this great college. I believe I have done this and I will continue to do this until Heidelberg's 14<sup>th</sup> president is identified later this semester. And so I look forward to working with all of you, in continuing the great traditions and realizing the many dreams we have for this great College.

Now, I was encouraged to share some past accomplishments with you tonight, and there were many, but with all due respect, I would prefer to reach forward. I would rather talk about what lies ahead; the many opportunities, and yes challenges, we face as we confront our future. Your program mentions "state of the college." More interesting for you and me might be "future of the college" and thus, with your permission, I'd like to share just a few brief thoughts.

First of all, as you may have heard, we just welcomed our largest freshmen class in the history of Heidelberg College. Nearly 450 new students, bringing total enrollment on the first day of classes to more than 1,200 students. Great news, to be sure, and certainly reason to celebrate. However, enrollment growth brings with it its challenges -- housing, parking, dining, classroom space, athletic facilities. Just 3 years ago, we completed a master plan that outlined our boundaries, described new facilities, and in many ways, gave us a script that identified our strategic priorities. In light of our recent enrollment growth and projected planned growth, this master plan already needs revisited. Where do we grow? How do we grow? What will it cost? I don't know about all of you, but I'd like to be prepared to answer a few of these fundamental questions, questions that will perhaps transform who we are and what our future looks like.

Are there risks to growth? To change? You bet. However, in my humble opinion, the greater risks might be if we sit and do nothing. The competition is simply too strong, the stakes too high. A quote I have grown fond of is, "It's not because things are difficult that we dare not venture. It's because we dare not venture that they are difficult." Strategic planning, innovative thinking, and calculated risk. For me, this is a formula we must consider as we think about our immediate future.

Second, and related to what I just mentioned, is our need to provide the kinds of facilities our students, and let's be clear, parents, are now seeking if not, demanding from us. Gillmor Hall is a great start, a state-of-the-art science facility that is changing how our students learn. As you may know, we are in the midst of raising the needed funds for

the renovation of Laird Hall, now named Adams Hall after John Q. Adams who so generously provided a lead gift of \$2 million, the largest single donation this college has ever received. This is a \$5 million project and will house our new school of business, our second largest major, and undoubtedly the major with the greatest demand and potential for growth. This is why this project is so vital to our future enrollment success. Our goal is to have Adams Hall operational by fall 2010.

In addition to Adams Hall, we have in the works what is perhaps our most challenging project financially but potentially one of our most significant and exciting building projects in the 158 years of this institution. I hope you have had a chance to see Phase I of this project, our new synthetic-turf athletic field, located just behind us here. Aptly called our new “campus backyard,” this space provides a welcome opportunity for ALL of our students to be active and involved.

Phase I is complete and paid for. That’s the good news. Phase II, the largest phase of the entire recreation and activity complex at \$14 million, is planned but certainly not paid for. This is next on the list and like Phase I and very soon, Adams Hall, we will get this done. With five coaches of the year last year in the OAC and five Heidelberg teams participating in NCAA tournament play, we owe it to our student-athletes, and the general student body, to get done what every other school in our conference has and we don’t: a 21<sup>st</sup> century Recreation and Activity Center. I want to be clear, this facility is not a want. It is a desperate need. From recruiting to retention to providing an important wellness element to our college community, this facility is a

cornerstone to our future and will no doubt require all hands on deck – or all hands in wallets in this case.

Finally, as you look to the future with me, I want us all to consider the impact Heidelberg has had on our lives, personally and professionally, and think about how we have all given back. I'm not talking specifically about dollars here, although we need those too. I'm talking about other contributions of time and talent. A perfect example is our keynote speaker tonight. John Buccigross has so graciously given of his time and talent this weekend and will have impacted hundreds of students and the broader Tiffin community by his presence with us. Thank you, John, for being here.

Each summer, I challenge our incoming freshmen to think about their legacy. What will their time with us look like? What will they leave behind? How will they make this institution a better place? You are obviously in a very different place than our freshmen (is that an understatement??) but my message to you remains the same. How are we giving back to the institution we care so much about? If we are to realize our hopes and dreams as a premier educational institution, if we are to continue to serve the next generation of leaders, ESPN broadcasters, teachers, doctors and the like, the engagement of our friends and alumni will be fundamental to our future success.

In closing, it is through events like tonight that we gather together and get excited for the future, recognize, embrace and recommit to this place we love and remain passionate about. Individually, we can and we have made a difference in the life of Heidelberg College and its students. Collectively, you have provided, and will continue to

provide to our students, the greatest gift we can offer them: opportunity. The opportunity to become educated men and women who will go forth and make a difference in our world. That, my friends, is why we are here and what we are about. Thank you.