

ALUMNI WEEKEND
SATURDAY LUNCHEON
June 20, 2009

Thank you, Sondra. I appreciate very much that introduction and thank you for your dedicated service as Heidelberg's Board Chair.

I'd also like to thank our other Trustees who are with us today: former Trustee Darrell Brand, Gary Bryenton, Charlie Cole, Dave Drake, Ernie Estep, Ted Hieronymus, Sondra Libman, Ralph Quellhorst, Wade Young and Bob Youngblood

And how about a round of applause for your Alumni Council President, Mr. Bob Youngblood, who has just been a tremendous ambassador for our thousands of Heidelberg alumni. And finally, we need to thank Dr. Kathy Venema and her staff for their extraordinary effort in organizing this entire weekend.

It is indeed my honor and privilege to be with you this afternoon and share a few brief remarks. I better be brief or rumor has it that Dr. Venema has a large hook she will no doubt use if I go on too long here. But as this is my last formal address as Heidelberg's interim president, I hope she'll give me just a little latitude.

This luncheon address by Heidelberg's President has typically been a summary of a year gone by, if not a brief state of the university sermon. While I do think this sort of review is valuable, I'd like to share something a bit more reflective, if not personal, about this year and this community, which is risky for me because ever since I became a father 10 years ago, I've had a hard time keeping my emotions in check. For example, anybody watch Extreme Home Makeover? I'm not a regular with this show but any time I do watch, that whole scene when they shout "Move that bus," I completely lose it. Anybody else do the same? Anyway, I blame this on my children.

And speaking of my children, they are not here right now, which is probably a good thing, trust me, but the mother of my children is here, and I'd like to publicly say "thank you" to my wife, Jennifer, for her tremendous support and patience this year. This presidency thing can be rather demanding on a spouse and she has handled it extraordinarily well.

Anyway, back to my remarks and my decision to be more reflective rather than the more formal state of the university address. When I was appointed interim president last May by our Board of Trustees, I was sharing with my kids about "Daddy's new job." Upon what I thought was pretty good news, my oldest daughter's eyes welled up with tears. I asked her what was wrong and she tearfully looked up at me with her big blue eyes and said "we don't see you enough now. What's it going to be like when you're President?" Ouch.

I share this story with all of you because it reminds me of the sacrifices we ALL make, and have made, at critical moments in our lives, that truly shape who we are and what we care deeply about. Accepting the opportunity to lead this exceptional institution, for example, was one of these critical moments for me, as it has allowed me to be a witness to the extraordinary family

and community that is Heidelberg. And for me, that is what this weekend is all about. Re-connecting with our friends and the Heidelberg family.

As someone who has been in various administrative positions over nearly eight years at Heidelberg, I have come to know, enjoy, and respect the students, faculty, staff, friends and alumni who make up this Heidelberg family. However, it wasn't until I assumed the interim presidency that I truly comprehended the depth and commitment that each and every one of you have for this special place.

Quite frankly, this is where the state of the university is for me. It's about our people. And it's about the genuine care that all of you have toward the success of our students and the continued forward momentum of 159 years of a place called Heidelberg. It's that simple.

We have an attractive campus with beautiful buildings. We have outstanding academic programs. Our reputation as an affordable, hands-on, quality institution is evidenced by our continued accreditation and rankings in several national publications. Our athletic teams have experienced success recently that we may have thought was implausible.

Ladies and gentlemen, from the maintenance and care of these beautiful buildings, to the instruction in our classrooms, to the coaching of our student-athletes, it doesn't just take people to achieve the excellence we seek, it takes the RIGHT people. And this past year, serving as your president, I am so impassioned to share with you, our alumni, that your Heidelberg has the right people carrying out the mission of this great institution.

Our outstanding faculty, devoted staff, administration, Board of Trustees. These individuals are genuinely committed to this place. They are passionate about making Heidelberg better. They are truly unselfish in their work and support of our mission. And that is to see our students succeed. When our students succeed, Heidelberg as a whole prospers.

Thus, it has been a remarkable blessing to work with and among the many individuals who give of themselves daily for the betterment of this institution. It's been a blessing to meet so many of our devoted friends and loyal alumni who simply want to help. And I can't tell you how important and special that is to those of us who are absorbed in this campus community each and every day.

And I have some even better news about our people. In exactly 11 days, there will be one more person who will bring this same level of commitment, unselfishness, and passion to our community and this is Heidelberg's soon-to-be 14th President, Dr. Robert Huntington. I have had the privilege of getting to know him since the day he was introduced to our community back in December and let me assure you that Dr. Huntington, his wife Susan, and their two children stand ready to embrace all that is Red, Orange, and Black.

These are indeed exciting times for Heidelberg but let me also say this: We, like you, are challenged with exceedingly difficult economic conditions, conditions that are impacting higher education in numerous ways. Thus far, Heidelberg has weathered the storm well but make no mistake about it, we need your help now more than ever before. Yes, your annual financial support is essential but there are numerous ways you can assist this institution.

One of the most impactful ways you can help is joining our admission team and helping us recruit new students to the 'Berg. You don't know how? Call us. You want some admission materials? Not a problem. Another way you can help is to join our alumni relations team and reach out to your Heidelberg classmates and get them re-engaged, re-connected. For those of you able, let us know about jobs or internships at your place of employment. With the current economy, our students need your help now more than ever.

To conclude, let me just say this. We are indeed in the midst of challenging and uncertain times but this community, your community, has at its core the fundamental ingredient for meeting these challenges head on, and that is good people. The right people, including our incoming president. And because of this, the state of this university is strong and our future bright.

So as we advance together, as one community, toward a new era of Heidelberg, I look forward to working with each of you in embracing the extraordinary opportunities that lie ahead for this institution and the students we serve.

Thanks again for returning to your home away from home and I do hope you enjoy the remainder of your weekend with us. Thank you.