

Musings, Confessions and Declarations!
President's Fall 2018 Welcoming Address
24 August 2018

Good afternoon to everyone. This week is outstanding! We rolled out year three of our *HYPE Career Ready Program*, all students began their classes, and we pinned the first years at Opening Convocation. I am delighted to welcome new faculty and staff members to our community and to greet the return of colleagues. It is nice to be in one room.

Without fanfare and with positive intent, I would like to share some *Musings, Confessions and Declarations!* to help us think about our year ahead. I hope these aphorisms are not untimely for this occasion.

1. Transformation. Why would anyone or anything ever change itself intentionally to something other than what they are now? Why go through the difficulties, sacrifices and sometimes pain? I think most would answer because the change is worth it. With choice, do it to thrive. Go up. But sometimes there is no choice. Do it to survive. Do not go down. We should be motivated for both reasons.

2. Long Hard March. We are doing something great and worthwhile at Heidelberg. We are improving this University for our current, future and past students. We are growing in different ways to move forward and upward. Our march is long and hard. We will ascend in the higher education world. I am sincerely grateful to everyone here who preceded my arrival and has stayed on this march. I am sincerely grateful to everyone here who has joined this march. We can do it together!

3. Heidelberg Whole. Our University has no market position. We do not stand for “something special” in the heads and hearts of high school and college students. I once said that our undefined student value proposition and market positioning problem means that the “Heidelberg Whole is less than the sum of the Heidelberg Parts.” It is still true today. We need to be known for something compelling and distinctive.

4. Heidelberg Positioning. In the strategic context of competitive higher education in America today, we must offer job, career, and especially *life advantages* through our kind of education. We must deliver many “one plus one”

big opportunities for learning and integrate everything holistically into one *purposeful* journey. We need to communicate the features *plus* benefits *plus* results of our *distinctive* educational experience. I think that we can position the Heidelberg brand successfully on the *Big Opportunities ... Life Advantages* platform driven by *Heidelberg Advantage Plus* messaging and aimed at the our *Life of Purpose with Distinction* promise. These are *compelling* ideas.

5. Students and Competition. The defining question for us remains “Why Heidelberg?” Why don’t more students come to Heidelberg, especially females and non-athlete students? Why don’t more of our enrolled students graduate in four years, especially males and underrepresented students? Our responses and actions should be intentionally strategic rather than tactically reactionary. We must hold to our central identity as a liberal arts and professional education institution but not become fossilized in our thinking, resourcing and programming. How do we stay anchored and become more fresh, contemporary, and relevant in fulfilling our core student mission?

6. Rise Up ... Graduation. The goal of most students in higher education should be to earn a diploma in four years or less. Why have only about 40% of all the students who enrolled at Heidelberg in the past 25 years succeeded here in four years? We are rated, ranked, evaluated and chosen on this mediocre graduation rate. I hope this bothers all of us! This measurement is the key metric for judging success or failure in fulfilling our core student mission and setting our growth trajectory. For these reasons, our number one strategic objective is to improve our four-year graduation rate significantly as soon as possible. Knowing that we cannot be everything, do everything or have everything, we have big choices to make in order to accomplish this purpose. We must evaluate and prioritize our strategic initiatives prudently. We can do it together!

7. Errors and Mistakes. I make my full share of errors and mistakes. In all cases, I do my best to learn something and then go forward more prepared and motivated to help make Heidelberg a better and stronger school. Looking back recently, I admit that I got too lathered up on the name “BlackBeltCareerReady.” With sharper insight from others, *HYPE Career Ready* is much better! I believe that some of my “corporate” assessment of our organization has been shallow and wrong. I have also failed to ask enough of the right questions in certain key situations. In reflecting overall, I regret that some of my criticism of major turning points in Heidelberg’s storied history has been harsh at times. All of our work is hard all of the time.

8. Critical Skepticism. I admire and respect people who approach the world with a critical mind's eye and a sharp edge of skepticism. In robust combination with hard work, passion, commitment and action, this mental framework is the fuel for joyful curiosity, human discovery, deep learning, individual growth, and the advancement of civilization. It is the bedrock of a great academic. Heidelberg is filled with lots of outstanding and critically skeptical faculty members! That is good.

9. Campus Civility and Collegiality. With the confidence to succeed and the humility to recognize our risk for failure, we must hold this important sharp edge as we climb. Fear or arrogance can bring down people and destroy institutions. Confidence and humility must go together. At the same time, if we cannot conduct ourselves with a genuinely civil and collegial spirit, then how do we stand and who do we become? What kind of community of educators are we whenever we fail to show and give mutual respect to each other as we discuss, debate and argue vigorously on the tough questions, issues and challenges confronting us. As Roger Fisher said in *Getting to Yes* long ago, we must be hard on the problem and soft on the people.

10. Faculty Tenure. Since my decade as a Lasell College Trustee in Boston, I have not wavered in defending the positive purpose of Faculty Tenure. It is a special instrument that helps to safeguard academic freedom, reinforce mutual academic loyalty, and reward demonstrated academic excellence at an institution. After 100 years in practice (AAUP 1915), this idea is evolving and changing. Growing numbers of institutions like Lasell and Tiffin University succeed without tenure. It is not necessary for academic freedom, loyalty, and excellence. Today about 30% of all faculty lines are tenure track or tenured in this country. For schools like us without stronger student market demand or deeper financial reserves, Faculty Tenure must be managed thoughtfully at all times. To preserve tenure and thrive institutionally, I believe that we should stay committed to it and become more strategically nimble with it. In stark contrast to the 30% national average, I think that we should cultivate and support about 60-65% tenure track or tenured faculty lines.

11. Staff Respect. I respect the career commitment, dedication, and excellence of Staff colleagues as I do our Faculty. We have fully committed, passionately dedicated, and tremendously talented people working everywhere at Heidelberg. The hard work and care for our students by folks at all levels and jobs, from Krammes team members to athletic coaches to administrative assistants, is

powerful and inspiring. It even goes across generations here! I feel lucky to be part of it.

12. Responsibility and Accountability. I think that all of us are playing a team sport at Heidelberg University. The only way for Heidelberg to win is for our students to win and that means education and graduation. We all have individual responsibilities and all of us must play our positions exceptionally well for us to succeed. If we hold ourselves more accountable to Heidelberg's institutional mission, then our different kinds of expertise and stewardship will have greater value. We need to imagine ourselves like Senator John Glenn at age 77 going into space aboard the 7-person Discovery Space Shuttle in 1998 rather than as Astronaut John Glenn orbiting the earth for the first time solo on Mercury Friendship 7 in 1962.

13. Fear of Change. Like everyone, I have my own tolerance levels for change. Based on my life and work, and I recognize that I was born with many inherent advantages, it seems that my change threshold level is fairly high. I think that I was more fearful of change in the middle part of my business career when I thought I had things to lose. My view of change has changed. It is not something to fear. It is *not changing* and the *risk of complacency* that is frightening. Mediocre results and scorecards should terrify all of us all of the time! Heidelberg must have courage to continue changing in order to thrive. We can do it together!

14. Trust. I learned a long time ago that there are two things that we can either trust or not trust in each other. One is character. The other is competency. Character is about core values, beliefs and behaviors. Competency is about core skills, talents and results. If you had to choose someone to go into battle with, who would it be? The less skilled soldier who would take a bullet for you or the more skilled soldier who might not guard your backside? After nine years, when members of this campus community criticize leadership and say they do not "trust" the Administration and the President, I wonder whether they are questioning my character or my competency or both. It all hurts.

15. Care. Starting with me, I think that we all need to care more about our current, future and past students than about anything else. Starting with me, I think that we all need to care more about each other than about ourselves. Starting with me, I think that we all need to care more about all of Heidelberg University than about our own areas of work.

16. Love. All truly high-performing groups, teams, rock bands, firms, businesses, and organizations of all shapes and sizes seem to have one common characteristic that distinguishes them from others around them. It is love. The individuals eventually get to a space and place where they feel and express genuine love for their shared purpose, work and accomplishments together. They feel and express love toward each other. They love their organization. I have come to love Heidelberg and being with all of you in our great work together. Thank you for that gift.

17. Food, Fun and Friendship. We have a beautiful opportunity to make all of Heidelberg University one large and welcoming family kitchen table. Everybody loves great food and all cultures celebrate food. As we enter the second year of our long-term Parkhurst Dining *Harvest Fresh, Local & Healthy* partnership, and as we build out the new Coffee Shop & Loft, the innovative Clean Plate Station, and the exciting Saurwein Power Bar, we can invite more students, families, faculty, staff, trustees, alumni and guests to share fun and friendship with food. It is something we could love and celebrate together!

18. Purpose with Distinction. From the moment I met Heidelberg, I was inspired by the published Mission Statement that crescendos to “*leading to a life of purpose with distinction.*” It is lofty, unassailable, and substantive. It is also vague enough to capture the heads and hearts of young women and men in a compelling and distinctive way. Actually, having captured mine, I believe older men and women too. It is a perfect commitment! That is why we trademarked it a few years ago. I think it is Heidelberg’s Brand Promise. And when we start with the requisite transformation of our students, ourselves and our institution, we can follow the thread that leads to a life, a career, and a school of high *Purpose with Distinction.* That is why we exist at this University. That is why we should embrace and embolden our courage, trust, care and love for our students, for each other, and for Heidelberg.

Why not today and forever?

I wish everyone a joyful, productive and successful 2018-2019 academic year. Let us rise up together to improve our four-year graduation rate significantly and fulfill our core student mission more successfully!

Thank you.