

March 1, 2006

Inaugural Address
University of Minnesota Crookston

Dr. Charles H. Casey, Chancellor
March 3, 2006

Thank you all for being here, and special thanks to legislators, Regents, President Bruininks, Vice President Jones, representatives from other higher education institutions, faculty, staff, and students of UMC, family and friends, and UMC supporters from the region. Welcome.

I'm thrilled and honored that you are here. And, I'm encouraged by the size of the crowd because I know that, other than my family, the rest of you are here because of your connection to, and your belief in, the University of Minnesota Crookston.

We have much work to do at the University, at this campus, and in the region. Historically, inauguration speeches have provided wonderful opportunities to preview work ahead. President Bruininks did so in his inaugural speech three years ago, and two of my predecessors, who are here, Dr. Stanley Sahlstrom and Dr. Donald Sargeant, did so in their inaugural speeches. Having these distinguished guests here today is especially meaningful to me. My message today is a tribute to their leadership, as together we look forward to a bright future for the University, UMC, and the region.

My message today is that UMC is a strong institution. I am confident about the future of the campus and our capacity to meet the challenge of change.

This inauguration coincides with our celebrating the centennial of UMC. The campus has a rich history of success, and we will continue to be successful as we add value to the University, and value to this region of the state.

Of course, you all expect me to say more than that, so let me begin by telling you that I really like my job. I like my job because the Regents and the President have given me the opportunity to provide leadership to a campus in a part of the State that is home for my wife and me - a place we plan to stay. I like my job because of the people who work at UMC and the people who live in the region. I like my job because education has been a lifelong interest and passion. I believe deeply in public education because I am a product of public education, and I'm proud to say that my three children are all graduates of the University of Minnesota. They're here today, along with my three grand children, Maggie, Griffin, and Reid.

Let me now move forward by previewing the messages I would like to convey in this inaugural address. First, I would like to tell you a little more about me. Next, I'll share a few highlights of UMC history. Then, I'll move on to describe challenges we face and my ideas about how we can work together to serve the interests of the University of Minnesota, and the interests of the region.

First a little about me. It may be presumptuous for me to think that you're interested in who I am. Yet, I think your knowing me better will make a difference in what you think about what else I'm going to say.

I'd like you to know that my three sisters, who I'm happy to say are here today, and I were fortunate to have parents who placed a high value on education. My mother graduated from Mankato State, and she was a teacher. My dad took over the family farm. He was as serious about education as my mother, often telling the story about being so nervous the night he graduated from the eighth grade that he could hardly shave. He lived by the adage, "A job worth doing is worth doing well." Another of his favorites was, "Some people do more work getting out of a job than it would take to do the job." My parents expected us to finish what we started, and to always do our best.

Next, let me talk, briefly, about the history of UMC.

We're in the midst of a year-long centennial celebration, which makes this a good time to reflect on the 100 year history of the campus. Important to that history is the close tie with the Agricultural Experiment Station, the Research and Outreach Center, and the Extension Service. We are all part of the University, and our collective work is important to the region.

I'm not going to tell you about each of UMC's one hundred years – a relief I'm sure. My historical review is short. It goes like this:

- UMC had its beginning in 1906 when the Northwest School of Agriculture was established as a residential high school.
- Sixty years later, in 1966, the campus became a two year technical college.
- Twenty-seven years later, in 1993, the campus shifted focus to 4-year undergraduate education.
- Today, thirteen years later, we are involved in a strategic positioning process.

Thinking about the history of the campus, I would like to offer two observations.

- First, UMC has a strong record of successfully responding to changing needs and conditions. Dr. Sahlstrom and his team successfully responded to change when he assumed the role as Provost, and Chancellor Sargeant and his team did likewise.
- The second observation is that the call to change is happening faster. Winston Churchill said: "The longer you look back, the farther you can look forward." While I believe that, I also believe that we need to respond more quickly to changing needs and conditions, much more quickly than we used to in the past.

Having told you a little about myself, and about the history of the campus, let me now talk about some of the challenges we face at UMC. The book, *Good to Great*, by Dr. Jim Collins, has a chapter titled: "Confront the Brutal Facts, (yet never lose faith)." Some may call it the reality check.

So, I asked myself the question: "What are the brutal facts for UMC?" Here's my top ten list of brutal facts.

1. UMC student enrollment has declined over the past three years.
2. The number of young people graduating from high schools in the region is declining, which has contributed to declining enrollment at UMC.
3. We are a small campus surrounded by several larger higher education institutions. UMC program offerings are not as comprehensive when compared to other institutions in the region.

4. The public perception of UMC has not kept up with changes on campus. Many people still refer to the campus as “the tech school.”
 5. UMC tuition is higher than many other schools in the region.
 6. Funding for higher education as a percent of the State budget has declined.
 7. Some people have the view that UMC should close allowing resources to be redirected to other programs.
 8. Leadership transition on campus has been a challenge. Since 2003, there have been four different people in the top leadership position.
 9. Some people have the view that UMC faculty and administration are not working toward common goals.
- And brutal fact number 10 is it’s just too cold here.

You may have your own top ten list, or even a longer list. I offer mine to get us thinking about our challenges and what we do about them. And, you may wonder how I can make such a list and yet stay optimistic. Does my list of brutal facts suggest that I have lost faith in the future of UMC?

No way! And, here is why.

1. Yes, enrollment at UMC has declined. However, I am optimistic about our potential to make up for that decline over the next three years. We’re investing to reverse the negative trend.
2. Yes, it’s also true that high schools in the region are graduating fewer students each year, and that is a factor in our decline in enrollment. That brutal fact makes it all the more important that we find ways to spread the word that UMC is a good place to get a University of Minnesota diploma. And, that we spread that word across Minnesota, and beyond. I’m pleased to report that the number of applications is up by more than 100 as compared to last year at this time.
3. We are a small campus, and we are proud of it. Our students say they come to, and stay at, UMC because we are small. Faculty know their students by name, and often they know their families and communities.
4. The “tech school” is history as we establish our image as the University of Minnesota Crookston.
5. Tuition is higher at UMC as compared to many other colleges in the region. But, no other institution in the region offers a degree with the University of Minnesota brand.
6. Funding for higher education as a share of the State budget is an important public policy issue. I’m pleased we have strong legislative support from the region to help inform that discussion.
7. Closing UMC is off my worry list. The Regents and President Bruininks have been clear about their support for the campus, and I believe them, and I ask you to believe them too.
8. Change in leadership over the past 3 years is a fact. It’s also a fact that I’m a pretty stable guy, with good intentions to provide some stability as we move forward at UMC.
9. High on my list is to confront and resolve conflict on campus. Building trust one person, one issue, one day at a time is my goal. When Winston Churchill became Prime Minister of England in 1940, he said, “Of this I am quite sure, that if we

open a quarrel between the past and present, we shall find we have lost the future.”
UMC is too important to lose its future.

10. And finally in response to the last brutal fact, yes it’s cold here, but UMC is a warm inviting place to be.

Let me now move on to share my ideas about how we can work together to serve the interests of the University of Minnesota, and the interests of the region.

As context for my remarks, I would like to offer a quick summary of how I see the current planning initiative at the University. President Bruininks, with support from the Board of Regents, is leading a comprehensive process called *strategic positioning* that calls for action across all colleges, all campuses, and all administrative units. Thirty-four task forces are at work. A UMC planning Task Force is one of the 34, and I very much appreciate the work they are doing to help position UMC for the future.

The stated goal for the system wide effort is to position the University of Minnesota to be one of the top three public research universities in the world. This is a lofty goal for us Minnesotans, many of us raised to think that pretty good is good enough. Some even say that if we were naming Lake Superior today, we would name it Lake Pretty Good.

I’m here to tell you that “pretty good” isn’t good enough. Pretty good wasn’t good enough for Provost Sahlstrom, it wasn’t good enough for Chancellor Sargeant, and it’s not good enough for me.

I’m not in a position today to tell you what the UMC Task Force will recommend. Nor, am I in a position to tell you how President Bruininks and the Regents will respond to the recommendations. What I can tell you is that UMC will be different in the future. We will change, and, I am pleased to have this opportunity to share with you some ideas for change.

The first idea turns our full attention to students. UMC must continue to emphasize a high quality educational experience for students. Quality that starts with recruitment and spans the four years we set as a goal for students to graduate. Quality that shows itself in the classroom with an emphasis on a strong faculty-student relationship, coupled with student support services that exceed student expectations. This will result in increased retention and increased graduation rates, which means we will return more on the investment that families make paying tuition.

The UMC Task Force has invested significant time discussing a wide range of recruitment and retention issues. I expect the Task Force to recommend strategies to help us recruit more new students, and to retain more of our current students. Increasing retention rates by one or two percent per year will make a real difference. Students who drop out before graduating are costly for us, and dropping out before graduating is costly for families who have invested in their tuition. We can and must do a better job of ensuring that students have what they need to stay in school and graduate.

Ensuring a top quality learning environment means we must invest in the professional development of current faculty, and recruit new faculty who are highly qualified. This means that we will have more faculty with Doctoral level degrees, which will increase our

research capability, and foster a higher level of learning for our students. Offering our undergraduate students the opportunity to participate in a research experience will distinguish them as they embark on careers after graduating.

Task Force member and former Senator Roger Moe challenged UMC with the idea that “we should not just be preparing students to get good jobs, we should be preparing them to create good jobs.” For this to happen, we strive for graduates to be knowledgeable in their chosen major, competent in the use of technology, effective in communication, and able think strategically.

Understanding other cultures is another essential competence for graduates who will be doing business and establishing relationships in a global market place. Expanding opportunities for our students to learn about cultures, other than their own is a priority. To that end, we will continue efforts to diversify our student body, our staff, and our faculty. Partnerships with educational institutions in Korea and China are an important step forward, and we look forward to enrolling more international students this fall.

Plus, and perhaps more important, we strive for graduates to have an entrepreneurial spirit that will position them to be leaders in the communities where they work and live.

- This kind of graduate will not just go to work for a greenhouse, she will start a landscape business.
- This kind of graduate will not just take care of other’s children, he will start an innovative new child care center.
- This kind of graduate will not just use computer soft ware, she will develop it.
- This kind of graduate will not just work for a government agency, he will help change the agency.
- And together these graduates will be catalysts for the future economy of the region.

In short, I want our graduates to:

- **aim higher**
- **reach further**
- **and dream big dreams.**

For this to happen, we know we need partners, and we have great partners right here with the Research and Outreach Center, the Extension Service, the Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, and the Agricultural Utilization and Research Institute. New to us is a partnership with the Natural Resource Conservation Service that will enhance our teaching, research, and outreach capability.

We also recognize the importance of our many partnerships with other University of Minnesota campuses. The research infrastructure of the University is a tremendous resource for us, and I encourage discussions that will lead to graduate students working together with UMC faculty and students on research projects. Strengthening our relationships with schools, colleges, and universities in the region is another important priority as we seek ways to leverage our resources.

Another way we help students is by providing financial help, and I’m pleased with the success President Bruininks has had in raising money for student scholarships. UMC is

benefiting in a very real way from this success that allows us to annually offer more than 125 scholarships of \$1,500 each to qualifying students in their third and fourth year. This will help us retain more of our current students, attract more transfer students, and graduate more students. This is good for UMC, and it's good for the region.

With these new scholarships, UMC will offer more than 500 scholarships to UMC students each year— many are the direct result of support from alumni and friends of UMC, the Technical College, and the Northwest School of Agriculture. Thank you to all who are helping to build a strong scholarship program at UMC.

The last idea I want to mention today is the relationship UMC has with the Crookston community and the region. This relationship has a history that matches the 100 year history of the campus, and it's as important today as it was in 1906.

Many people have gone out of their way to tell me how much they support and appreciate the University and the Crookston Campus. We will build on that support as we continue to strive for excellence as a 4-year undergraduate campus of the University of Minnesota, and as we continue to fulfill the University's land grant mission in the region.

Mark Twain once said that he wrote a long speech because he didn't have time to write a short one. This speech is a long one for me, and I appreciate your taking the time to listen and think about what I have said.

Change isn't easy. We tend to like things the way we remember. We worry about whether change will be change for the good, so staying with what we know is easier. We often assume that change means one big thing, all at once, when in fact 100 small changes over time will create the big change we're looking for.

We know that the brutal facts I described earlier are true. We know we have to do something to put UMC, and the region, on a path that will lead to a better future. I ask you today to join with me in discovering the 100 things we can do, together, over time, to make UMC successful. Join with me in recommitting to action that will serve the best interests of the University, and at the same time serve the best interests of the region. An old Irish saying says "It all goes for the same."

President Bruininks and the Board of Regents are resolved to make change, and I want UMC to be among their best examples from across the institution. It's why I accepted the opportunity to be your Chancellor.

It's why I want to say again that UMC is a strong institution, and to say again that I am confident about the future of the campus and our capacity to meet the challenge of change.

Thank you to all of you for being here today. I especially want to thank my family and my wife Barbara for all her help and encouragement. Thanks to everyone who has helped me since I first set foot on a University of Minnesota campus in 1958. It's been a great ride and I'm not ready to get off yet.