

University of Minnesota, Crookston
April 2010 Campus Assembly
Chancellor Charles H. Casey

Good afternoon. Welcome to the Spring 2010 Campus Assembly. This is the time of year when the calendar seems to speed up as we look forward to commencement in just five weeks. It's always a busy time – this year is no exception.

What does seem an exception is the extraordinary pace of change we are all experiencing. Then again, this exception may become the rule as we accept the reality of what many call the *new normal*.

I'd like to begin my remarks this afternoon with an expression of my sincere gratitude to faculty and staff who, day in and day out, can be counted on to provide exceptional service and support for students. Your loyalty to the mission of this campus is important and valued. Your good work is evident in the classroom and on the court, in the laboratory and on the stage, in the region and beyond. Student organizations and service learning projects round out the student experience and extend the reach of our campus. All together, your good work prepares our students to make a good living and have a good life.

To the students here today, thank you for making the University of Minnesota your choice for a big degree, and for making Crookston your choice as a campus for earning that degree. You have represented us well with more than 13,000 hours of service learning in the community. Your participation on teams and in clubs and at competitive events does us proud. You inspire others with your commitment to activities like the Pay-It-Forward trip and the legislative day at the Capitol. Special congratulations to the Equestrian teams and to SIFE for their achievements. We're proud of you and you can be justly proud of your accomplishments.

In case you haven't noticed, today is April Fool's Day. It's interesting to note that in some countries like the UK and Australia, April Fool's Day only lasts until noon. Being an International Campus, I'm advising that to be the case here today.

April 1 is significant to me personally because it's the date of my appointment as Interim Dean and Director of Extension in 1999. I learned a lot from that experience and from my four plus years as your Chancellor. What I learned helps me move this campus forward during this challenging time.

Here are some things I know for sure:

- First, the economic situation in Minnesota, and at the University, is and will continue to be uncertain and challenging. We have been over and over the brutal facts of what this means to us at Crookston, so I won't repeat them.
- Second, the current economy requires us to be even more adaptive and responsive to change. This is true across the private and public sector, including higher education.
- Third, organizations that get comfortable with change and find their own solutions are more likely to have a viable future. In other words, if we fail to plan for our future, someone else will do it, and we might not like it.
- Fourth, getting comfortable with change is easy for some, hard for others, and for some it's impossible. The reality is this: We can't go back. We only go forward. (nostalgia is not a strategy)
- Fifth, communication is vitally important always, and especially during times like this. When it's most important is when we sometimes take too much for granted. Messages get misunderstood, lost, and forgotten. What we don't understand, or we don't like, sometimes gets translated into something different. As Mark Twain said, *A lie can get halfway around the world before the truth can get even get its boots on.*
- Said again, this time more positively, communication is vitally important. It is essential to keep open and honest communication going, giving the benefit of the doubt, trusting that together we can continue to move forward.
- Sixth, everyone can make a difference. But, no one can do it alone. There is no I in Team.

- And, seventh, I am absolutely convinced – without doubt – that we have the intellectual capacity and talent on this campus to determine our future, respond to the changes around us, and implement strategies that will get us to a better place.

Let me tell you why I'm so confident.

- We have our highest enrollment ever
- Our students are better prepared
- We have more online students
- And, more students of color
- And, more International students
- And, many new faculty and staff
- We have new majors, both on campus and online
- We have the first LEED certified residence hall at the University
- We have made investments in classrooms, laboratories, facilities and technology
- And, finally, we have made significant improvements in efficiency and productivity

Looking at this list of accomplishments and others, it's easy to wonder if we haven't done enough; to ask: *What more do we have to do to be successful?*

Well, the reality as I see it is this: What we have done is good. However, to quote the legendary baseball pitcher Satchel Paige: *Don't look back, someone may be gaining on you.* Another quote from Satchel was: *My pitching philosophy is simple – keep the ball away from the bat.*

Both quotes remind us that we must stay ahead of the game, finding a new way to operate in the new normal of our economy.

Staying ahead of the game and finding new ways ----- these are not new ideas for this campus. We are good at this. We have transitioned many times. From a

residential high school to a two-year technical college. And then to a four year campus.

The strategic plan approved in 2006 has served us well. But, it's time to think about how best to move forward. It's time to ask, again, the basic questions:

- Who will our students be?
- What programs will best serve them?
- What services will best support their experience?
- What organizational structure will improve the student experience?
- How do we support professional development for faculty and staff?
- How can we foster collaboration internally and externally?
- How can we better leverage all the resources of the University to better serve the region?

These questions need to be refined - a process we have started with a group of Executive Committee members, faculty and students. We've started to review student services, energy conservation, athletics, curriculum changes, technology, and online education.

My expectation is that discussion will continue at department meetings and in units across campus. We will communicate progress as we go, consider all input, and move forward with decisions as appropriate.

One dimension of planning is identifying program priorities. Program decisions are important because the admissions staff is meeting with high school juniors now, and these juniors want to know what programs we will have in place for the fall of 2011.

Another dimension of planning is developing budget scenarios, with projections into the future. This is something our finance office has capacity and talent to do.

We have a new budget planning model that I'm convinced will help us be better prepared for the uncertainties we are facing.

Of course, planning for the future requires participation from across the campus. A new budget model is not enough. Let me say again that my expectation is for all departments and units to continually review and evaluate your operations, and to continually consider what is best for our students.

Collaboration remains a tremendous opportunity for us. The more we are able to work together, the more we will be able to build on our strengths. To help make this happen I will continue to deliver on my commitment to share information as broadly as possible at campus forums, meetings in departments and units, and in other ways.

To summarize in simple words: We have a challenge on our hands. We didn't cause it, and it's not our fault. But, we are impacted just the same.

And, the way I see it, it's up to us to plan the future of this campus. No doubt there is uncertainty, and yes, some worry. Just the same, we have reason to be optimistic because we have the intellectual capacity to take this campus to a better place. We are smart enough, motivated enough, and committed enough to do this. We must, we can, and we will. We owe it to those who have served this campus in the past and those who depend on us now. And, we owe it the community and the region.

Thank you for your attention today and your continued support.