

**Opening Faculty Workshop Address**  
**By President Darrel D. Colson**  
**Tuesday, August 31, 2010**

Good morning, colleagues. It's so nice to be here with you. I'm going to start in something like the way I started last year—with a quotation from Homer, who begins the third book of the *Odyssey* like this:

As the sun sprang up, leaving the brilliant waters in its wake,  
Climbing the bronze sky to shower light on immortal gods  
And mortal men across the plowlands ripe with grain. . . . (*Odyssey* 3:1-3, Fagles translation)

You can never go wrong with Homer; and he—or she—always draws me back at this time of year. As I think I shared with you at our last—my first—faculty workshop, I love this time of the year. I've always liked the rhythm of the school year: the anxiety students feel three weeks into a semester as tests and papers fall due; the relief we feel at the end of the semester when tests are completed, papers are submitted, grades turned in; the sheer joy and electricity one feels on Commencement Day. And, of necessity, I love this time of the year when we slowly, perhaps somewhat reluctantly look ahead to the first day and realize how much still must be done: syllabi prepared, class plans reworked, assignments revisited and sometimes completely replaced. But that reluctance gives way, almost always, to excited anticipation.

One of the wonderful features of our work—I guess I should say, your work, for now I must enjoy this pleasure vicariously through you. But one of the most wonderful features we enjoy is that we get so many do-overs. A term lasts barely four months. A May term lasts less than a month. Three times a year, we get to start from scratch, on a clean chalkboard—or whiteboard or interactive board, whichever metaphor connects to your age or experience. I'm still a chalkboard guy, I confess. If our last time through a course didn't work so well, we can modify it completely; if it worked well enough, but could be better, we can experiment. What a tremendous opportunity for rejuvenation.

And then, best of all, we begin to look forward to the return of “our kids.” As I jog around town in the morning, I pass “plowlands ripe with grain.” As I round the city, I also see the sun rising over the Cedar River, “leaving the brilliant waters in its wake.” The Homer passage literally describes scenes from our lives, but as a metaphor, it jumps the gun. Our corn fields are ripe, but our students are not. Amid ripeness and bounty in the fields, the students arrive, but they arrive unplowed, unplanted, and uncultivated.

I know that the law regards them as adults for the most part, and it's probably demeaning to call them "kids," so I try not to do so in their presence; but quite honestly, I do think of them as our kids. We are charged with the responsibility to challenge and nurture these young people, and we take the charge pretty seriously, don't we? We have a lot of work to do with them, lots of soil preparation, furrowing, seeding, irrigating, weeding—and we hope, we pray, that by April or May they are ripe for the harvest. Sometimes, after a class session or after reading a set of exams or papers, we fear that the ground might be barren, that their minds somehow lost whatever fertile topsoil was there—perhaps washing it out the mouth of the Mississippi by consuming too much moisture of one sort or another—but we rarely give up. Like good farmers, we wake up each day, drink a hearty cup of coffee, and return to the fields—knowing that the outcome of our efforts is in many ways outside our control—will it rain too much or too little? We put our minds and our shoulders to what we can control, and give it our best.

I've probably mangled this metaphor as much as I ought, but I think you get the point. I've relished these past few weeks as I've watched the town slowly fill with our students. The parking lots that were empty all summer slowly began to fill with cars; the cross-country course across the street from Greenwood, which gave me an uninterrupted view of sunset, suddenly became populated with our runners at odd hours of the day. My mind fills with the optimism that a new beginning affords us. And I do return to those literary giants in our tradition who seemed to have a handle on the power and potential and magic of new beginnings: Homer, of course, and Grace Slick, whom you've heard me quote before: "It's a new dawn." In my time here at Wartburg, I've begun to understand that it cannot merely be a coincidence that Grace took time between sets at Woodstock to praise the orange acid.

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Let me talk a bit about my year, my whirlwind first year. As I mentioned to you last year at this time, I committed myself and a large part of my time to connecting and learning, to soaking up as much as I could the culture of the institution. I had seen—more often than I wish—new presidents come into a place and set about to change the culture without really understanding it, so I was determined to get to know this place as well as human effort could guarantee.

I've spent time with pockets of alums all over the country, sometimes in formal alumni events, sometimes in informal settings and gatherings: Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Illinois, Wisconsin, of course, but also Missouri, Texas, Arizona, California, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. I've spent time with Regents and with former Regents in many of those places, as well as in Germany. I've tried to spend as much time with faculty and staff as my time and their forbearance would allow. As I traveled I've read everything—well,

almost everything—I've been given that relates to the history of the College. I've still got some stuff stacked up at home because the volume is simply so vast.

These people I've met, these books, letters, reports, emails, and documents have taught me much about the College, and I want to share with you a couple of the most important lessons.

First, although I was warned from time to time that I'd run into alums who have issues, who contend over bones with the College, I've found far fewer of those than I would have expected. Most colleges have serious sub-communities of alumni who resent their alma mater for decisions or choices made—some going back decades. At my previous institution, we had a huge number of alumni—including a prominent former NBA player whose number was "00"—who refused to set foot on campus because a president fired an athletic director in the 1970s. I have not found that kind of pettiness here.

To be sure, there are alums who wish we'd saved Wartburg Hall, who wish we'd saved Danforth Chapel, who wish that this president or that president, or this Board or that Board, had made different decisions. But rare is the bitterness that translates into hostility and disaffection. Ours is a marvelously magnanimous group of alums who can separate their disagreements from their gratitude, their regrets from their love of the place—and continue to act on the latter.

This place has undergone dramatic change in the last fifty years, change that would have driven most alums away. At a lunch with several guys who'd graduated in the '60s, they talked about the old days: a student body of about 600, all of them with German surnames, all Midwesterners, almost all from Iowa, all but a few from the American Lutheran Church. In fact, one of my lunch companions allowed that there were some German Catholics in the student body, but the Lutherans were under strict orders from their parents not to date any of the Catholics. One guy at the lunch, somewhat sheepishly, said that he was one of those Catholics, and the other guys were stunned. It was sort of like a coming out.

These guys know—as do all of our alums—that the College looks dramatically different now than it did: that more than 100 students are international; that more than 150 of the students are people of color; that self-identified Lutherans are in the minority; that the student body now numbers more than 1800; that many of their favorite buildings are gone; that the president is not a Lutheran pastor—indeed, is not a Lutheran at all. Whereas at many schools, any one of these changes would give alumni cause—or pretext—to withdraw their support, our alumni support the school wholeheartedly—if possible, even more enthusiastically than ever. I think the reason for this undying support lies in the core of the place and goes back to our founding, and I'll talk about that in a bit.

I got a sense of the dramatic change in the place when I was talking to a group at an alumni outfly recently, and I was describing the demographic changes in the student body over the last 50 years. After my talk, a couple of graduates from the 1950's came up and said, "Wait a minute, our class was diverse. We had a guy from Nigeria, a guy from Tanzania, and a guy from Alabama. Or was it Georgia?" They set about arguing about whether he was from Alabama or Georgia as I walked over to grab another Bratwurst. I assume that they were being comical; but even so, their story illustrates the changes we've undergone.

The second thing I've learned as I've traveled around is how varied are the lives of our alums. There's a joke you hear around here, and it's often used to explain our modesty, both our modesty about achievements and our modest financial resources. "All of our alums are preachers and teachers," one hears. Sometimes it's expanded to "All of our alums are preachers, teachers, and social workers." Balderdash, I say. Yes, we have lots of those among our ranks, but we have lots of others as well. We have lawyers, doctors, scientific researchers, broadcasters, cops, executives, accountants, and so many, many more. Even many of the preachers are so much more than preachers: they are pastors, composers, theologians, and poets. Many of the teachers have completed a career in teaching and then gone into work as financial planners, nonprofit managers, and consultants. Several of the social workers now manage huge enterprises.

We have, as I mentioned at my inauguration, a Time "Woman of the Year." We have an alum who runs, with his father, one of the largest—if not the largest—vertically integrated food business in Bangladesh; we have a scientist who was just invited by the royal family of Abu Dhabi to set up a state-of-the-art research facility; we have a fellow who was CEO of one of the largest health insurers in America; we have two former members of our women's cross-country team who are among the ten fastest marathoners in America. I'll stop listing, but I want you to see my point: our alums have gone on to do everything under the sun, and they exemplify precisely that adaptability and versatility that we are confident the liberal arts impart. Our success stories are manifold, and some are so startlingly impressive that I find my mouth agape when I hear them told.

The third big thing I've learned is about our commitment to service. One of the unfortunate things about higher education is its band-wagon effect. While one of the great strengths of the American system—or lack of system—in higher education is its diversity of mission and impact, we nonetheless often see a herd mentality, a desire to keep up with the Joneses that can confuse mission and dilute effort. Commitment to service is one of these topics or emphases that have come to characterized more and more of the rhetoric that schools promulgate about

themselves. One gets the sense that many schools have simply bolted a service component onto an institutional structure that was designed with other things in mind.

On coming to Wartburg, I had a bit of worry about the depth and stolidity of our commitment to service, but let me tell you all what you know already: Our commitment to service is deep and unwavering. I began to understand this early on when I spent time with our alums. It is this that keeps them bound to the College so tightly. For all of the changes that the College has undergone—for goodness sake's, it's been located in a half dozen states during its lifetime—the College remains committed to a vision of service that never dims. Our own students talk of this, not always reflectively or profoundly, but sincerely. When I spend time with them, they are often thinking—among other things, of course—about serving the communities they inhabit.

My understanding of this feature of the College deepened when Christy and I visited Germany during the summer. We spent several days in Eisenach, exploiting Edie Waldstein's facility with the German language to get to know the city's officials and the College's dear friends, our own German Regents, Peter Brodhun and Gunter Schuchardt. Then, we traveled to Wittenberg to connect with our faculty-staff heritage study group under the steady guidance of Kit Kleinhans and Penni Pier. Throughout, in addition to soaking up as much German coffee, white asparagus, schnitzel, and Eisenacher schwarzbier as was available, I was soaking up the culture and the connection between Luther land and the College, between the Castle and the College.

The Castle was founded as were so many structures like that, as an effort to project power and increase the prestige of the owner, in this case Ludwig the Jumper. But it is fascinating to me that the theme of St. Elizabeth winds itself through all of the Castle lore; there are even magnificent and grand artistic commemorations of her from both the Catholic and the Protestant perspectives, as our friend Gunter said. I looked pretty carefully at the representations, and I'll have to confess that I would have a hard time picking out which was Catholic, which was Protestant. Wonderfully—and not surprisingly—the communists who ruled Eisenach for a half century loved St. Elizabeth, for her vocation was to take food from the rich, that is, her husband's family, and give it to the poor.

But the theme of service dominates the story of the Castle, a castle that in its nine centuries of existence has never seen military action of any sort. Even Martin Luther's time in the Castle, time he spent translating the New Testament into German, is seen by those close to the Castle through the lens of service. He was providing service to people who were being victimized by the more powerful.

In Neuendettelsau, we learned of the great ambition of Pastor Löhe, an ambition motivated by the desire—maybe even the need—to serve. Banished by church authorities to a backwater place where they hoped never to hear from him again, he became the churchman most concerned and most engaged in ministering to the German expatriates and immigrants here in America. In his work advancing the diaconal ministry for women and preparing young missionaries to come to the New World to found schools, he embodied the teaching of Luther in the Small Catechism. What does it mean to say, “You shall not murder”? On Luther’s view, this means that we are to help our neighbors “and support them in all of life’s needs.”

The key to understanding Löhe is to grasp his focus on problems, the problems real people face every day, and his belief that we are all responsible to help solve those problems. It is no accident that the school his student, Georg Grossmann, founded in Saginaw, Michigan, the school named Wartburg is characterized by that same focus on problems and solutions, on real people and their needs.

We talk in our strategic plan about enhancing the deep and integrative learning that is our hallmark. These, too, have become pervasive concepts in higher education, again exemplifying the herd mentality; but in our case, they are not bolted on. They characterize the school from its founding, really from even before its founding. Deep learning certainly entails engagement beyond the stereotypical classroom of yore--active and collaborative methods of teaching and learning, yes, but also application to the world and its challenges and the dialectically informed return to the classroom to modify and refine what one has learned. The ideal would be the perfect synchronization of theory and practice, in which each so completely informs the other that students can walk out of the classroom and be immediately useful as problem-solvers on the ground.

Certainly, Wartburg has pursued deep learning for a long, long time, and has coupled that with the effort to integrate the ways of knowing represented by our many disciplines. Our ongoing efforts with essential education, with multicultural studies, with leadership studies, with social entrepreneurship all speak to a value that animates us, and that is the value we inherit—maybe it’s in our DNA—from Neuendettelsau.

In Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* is this wonderful passage, it’s in Book 10 I believe, in which he’s wondering aloud what is the happiest life for a human being. (One of the wonderful features of Aristotle’s writing is that you can read a long passage in which he considers a number of possibilities, and not know which of them he endorses. This passage is no different.) He says, on the one hand, that what is most uniquely human is our intellect, and therefore that the happiest, most fulfilling life is sheer contemplation, the pure exercise of the mind on ideas. And yet, on the other hand, he says, humans are flesh-and-blood critters who need to eat to

stay alive, and who therefore need to build cities and engage in political organization in order to grow and secure the food that is necessary for life.

These two visions gave rise, in the Middle Ages, to the rival views of the appropriate human life: the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa*. These two visions gave rise to two different understandings of liberal education: the one a vision of pure contemplative and theoretical speculation, considering any idea with a practical use to be beneath the dignity of human consideration; the other a vision of the liberal arts as very practical skills enabling their possessor to exercise liberty, to compete and succeed in the rough-and-tumble world of cooperative and competitive human endeavor.

At various points in my life, each of these visions has drawn me into its orbit; The *vita contemplativa* is very enticing: I was trained as a philosopher, after all, and my favorite philosopher was for many years Plato. Enough said, right? But Wartburg has always cast its lot with the *vita activa*. Our mission says it as clearly as it could: for us, the learning we hope to inspire in our students is instrumental; it is to empower and equip them to lead and to serve—to lead and to serve in the flesh-and-blood world we share. Our tradition is clear on this as well: Pastor Grossmann was not sent to Michigan to train young Germans to think all day long; he was sent to prepare them to connect their thoughts with action. To identify problems that bedevil us and our neighbors and to solve them. That is our heritage.

I'll let these three lessons that I have learned settle for a while, and I'll turn elsewhere.

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Let me talk a bit about the state of the College. I believe—at the risk of jinxing us—that we'll enter this school year slightly stronger financially than we were last year. We came through the 2009-10 year with a balanced budget, due largely to the fact that you have tightened your belts and accepted stringent controls on wages and benefits. We received some substantial gifts that have helped us shore up the plant fund. Our auxiliary enterprises have shown some improvement, the "W," in particular beginning to generate more income in each quarter. At the end of the week, we will greet a solid student body. Retention of the whole student body, we believe, will settle in at a slightly lower rate than we saw last year or the year before. Our new class should be slightly smaller than last year's, and within the class we should see some increase in the number of international students as well as domestic students of color, both of which are goals we have been seeking for some time.

We are not out of the woods, of course. Lower retention numbers are likely influenced by this exasperating economy. Every time I turn on the TV or pick up the newspaper I realize both how

fragile the economy is and how fortunate we are to be at a place that can in fact say that it ran a balanced budget last year. I know that you all feel a pent-up demand for supplies, equipment, support, and salary increases. I want you to know that our Regents are aware as well that our solid financial picture is beholden to sacrifices from you all, and high on their list of priorities is to address the lack of salary increase in the recent past. I'm pleased that we will be returning to the 8% contribution to your TIAA-CREF accounts in this fiscal year, and I hope to be making better announcements in the future.

I'm thankful that the Task Force and I were able to develop a plan to implement the President's Budget Advisory Council, and I look forward to populating that group as soon as is practical so that I can begin to work with them on planning. My hope is that the group will meet regularly, not just to help to prepare future budgets, but also to help to monitor budgets, and to help with several sorts of planning that have budgetary implications. In due time, I shall share with that group, as well as the campus community, another report—what will become an annual undertaking—of what I take to be the significant assumptions, challenges, and opportunities in our fiscal life.

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Now let's talk strategic plan. We're completing a long, somewhat tiring process. We began three years ago with the Commission on Mission: Summit Meetings; Task Force deliberations and reports; Planning drafts; community comment and feedback; and now we have what is either the ultimate or the penultimate draft of a Strategic Plan to guide our efforts over the next decade or more. The process hit some bumps along the way, and so it lengthened beyond what might have been its natural length.

What was good is that we modified and shaped the Commission process into a planning process without losing any of the valuable work that had been done early on. I like what has happened; the process, long though it was, allowed and encouraged members of every constituency to make suggestions and offer advice, so that the Planning Committee, which had been the Task Force Steering Committee, benefitted from maximal input.

I find it an energizing plan—both because it highlights what are our strengths and it offers opportunity for innovation. In fact, I'd say that it even begs for innovation. We've talked in the past about the fact that we went about this in an unorthodox manner. Whereas the conventional way of planning is to articulate at the outset the values that will guide the planning, then to move to the general goals that will guide the organization's decisions, and then to move to more specificity in a sort of deductive process down to particular actions. Our

process worked in reverse. The Commission generated four reports filled with specificity—perhaps too much specificity, perhaps not. But that specificity enabled the Planning Committee to move to generality in a somewhat inductive fashion. (Note that we are back to Aristotle, again. It's hard to get away from Aristotle.) What we have is an inductively drawn plan: we digested the specifics that the Commission identified; we then inductively inferred the general goals that those specifics implied; and we seized upon and articulated the general goals and their supporting objectives. The result is a plan that not only warrants the specific items the Commission advocated, but should warrant a host of other specific items that likewise serve to advance the goals.

This is what energizes me. The Plan's six goals authorize almost all of the action items that the Commission identified, but now people throughout the College community ought to be able to take the plan and apply it to their own unique circumstances, identifying their own unique opportunities, and act strategically. As I've said to a number of audiences this summer, there's nothing shocking about the six goals that we identify and codify.

**Goal 1: Expand deep and integrative learning in the liberal arts tradition.**

**Goal 2: Strengthen a commitment to vocation.**

**Goal 3: Nurture an inclusive and vibrant mentoring community.**

**Goal 4: Provide outstanding teaching, learning, and living infrastructure.**

**Goal 5: Invest in the people of Wartburg College.**

**Goal 6: Tell the Wartburg story.**

They should come as no surprise to any Wartburger. They are goals that all of us can and do embrace. Like the six goals, the twenty-two objectives should come as no—or very little—surprise—to Wartburgers. The Plan is tiered in the sense that the Goals are inflexible, the objectives firm but less inflexible, the actual tactics we mention revisable depending upon whether they work or not. And by “work,” I mean whether they help reach the objectives that support the goals.

To the extent that the elements of the plan don't look new, one might draw the conclusion—the incorrect conclusion—that they don't therefore inspire action. The proof, however, will be in the pudding.

To know whether we are making progress or not, we will identify metrics or markers of assessment that allow us at least once a year to determine unambiguously whether we have made progress or not. Not only is it important to identify those markers, obviously, but also the instruments or tools we will use to make the determination. The Cabinet is working right now on those topics and will engage members of the community as necessary and advisable.

Once we've settled on markers of progress, the plan will give us a huge advantage: it will give us a framework within which to make decisions about actions to take. Knowing what goals we all share, what goals we are measuring, should help us all choose actions that seem most likely to yield the desired results. Bill Withers has challenged me a couple of times, once at least in this very room; he's said that when he looks at this plan, he's not sure he sees innovation or boldness. Largely because of questions like his, questions that came from others as well, we shaped a plan to foster and facilitate innovation.

I hope—in fact, I know—that the plan will inspire many of you to think of tactics we might employ, actions we might take—or, more to the point, tactics you might employ, or actions you might take—to bring our common goals to fruition. The four task force reports contain some fascinating and unusual ideas, even some innovative ideas. But, the task forces did not exhaust the creative energies of this college community—not by a long shot. I've seen your work for a year now; I know, without a shred of doubt, that if we share a set of common goals and you feel supported, both by the administration and by the Regents, a “hundred flowers [will] blossom.” (It's hard to write a speech of this sort without quoting Chairman Mao, right?) The Plan is a vessel, a vehicle, maybe even an incubator—designed to germinate and cultivate good ideas. And because we'll be thinking teleologically, that is, in terms of the targeted outcomes we need to reach, it should equip decision-makers in every office in the College to determine, with some measure of confidence, which potential actions have a greater likelihood of advancing the College toward its goals.

Some actions can be taken without new expenditures of money. Some will simply result from consciously aligning our actions with goals. Some innovation, however, will require new funds, so I anticipate creating a financial structure or instrument, the details still to be determined, to elicit and fund promising initiatives, to encourage action in pursuit of the goals. Every time this topic has come up—that is, the topic of how serious I am about innovation—I've tried to be encouraging and realistic at the same time. I welcome ideas that help us serve these goals. I'm eager to support ideas that move us in the direction we need to go. Resources are finite, of course. Remember the first assumption in the economics textbooks? So choices will be necessary.

I have the great pleasure and privilege, the “blessings” one might say in Lutheranesque, to work with some very bright and energetic people. What you do with our students has amazed me this past year. I know that I start to sound a bit hokey, but I’m utterly serious here. (And I don’t know if that’s good or bad.) But just as my mouth falls open when talking with some alums about their achievements, my mouth does the same when I see what achievements you are able to draw out of our students. Whether they are in the TV studio or in the biology labs, sharing the posters of their senior projects or performing for an audience, they seem to accomplish more than I ever could have expected. Their openness, earnest optimism, dogged persistence, and creativity are endearing, sweet even.

I have a vision for Wartburg’s future, a vision that can only be realized by your work, but a vision that I have every confidence we will realize. Simply put, I mean for us to become the very best school in the Midwest (maybe we can widen that realm somewhat, but certainly in this region) at deep and integrative learning. I’m going to make a confession: I love to read those college rankings that come out in those magazines: *US News*, *Princeton Review*, *Fortune*, *Washington Monthly*, and so on. I know that their research methods are absolutely execrable; I even called the chief researcher at *US News* once to ask him about the methods. It was an odd conversation: He was telling me what they count and I kept asking him why they count those things. The conversation went nowhere. It’s exasperating stuff.

But, I’m going to make an embarrassing confession: I actually enjoy watching our star rise. I guess that’s hypocrisy, but I’m OK with that. I take guilty pleasure in the positive notice we’ve received from some of those magazines as well as from other organizations, whose methods are less mysterious and whose results are less random, organizations such as the Carnegie Foundation, the President’s Honor Roll, BreakAway, and Colleges of Distinction. And I love getting awards from the Washington Center and the Talloires Network.

Eddie does a good job of trying to temper my interest in this stuff. She says, quite rightly, that we should focus on pursuing mission and not obsess about rankings. (Quite true, but I notice that the Admissions web site has a whole page devoted to this kind of stuff.) Eddie’s point, though, is Aristotle’s point. In the *Ethics*, he considers the possibility that human happiness is earning the praise of one’s neighbors, is attaining honor in their sight—and he easily rejects this possibility because it places the source of our happiness in others, not ourselves. Happiness, he concludes, is something within our own control, something we can attain by exercising the best of our human potential—by pursuing excellence.

I concede Aristotle’s point—and maybe it’s Eddie’s point as well. Our success will be determined by how well we master the future of opportunities and challenges that lie before us. Our quest must be to do the very best job we can, each day and in each moment, to advance the mission

of challenging and nurturing these students we share, helping them to discern their vocations and equipping them to be leaders and servants when they walk out our doors. The faith that is our heritage and the learning that we spend so much of our time and energy trying to impart and stimulate are our focus, not glory.

And yet, I'll share with you a story I've been talking about this summer out on the stump. Another Lutheran college president, a person who has spent a lot of time in the Midwest as both teacher and administrator, recently said to me that during the bulk of his career he never paid attention to Wartburg, never thought about it at all. Now, however, he said, "We're always looking over our shoulder to see what you guys are up to." I liked the metaphor of a foot-race, and I thought then, and I think now—to the disappointment of Aristotle, I suspect—"Yes, and before long, you are going to be looking at the numbers on the back of our jersey."

When I look down the road a few years, I see a situation in which every academic in the region is wondering what we are up to and how we pull it off; I see every high school counselor in the region noticing which high school students are engaged and involved and thinking what a good match they would be for Wartburg; I see every parent in the region thinking that their college visits with their high school kids are not complete until they visit Wartburg. I see the school setting the standard in the minds of those who care about higher education.

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Well, it's long past time for me to stop. Let me do two more things: Thank you much for your patience with me this year. All of you have tolerated my idiosyncrasies, and many of you have actively mentored me through my first year; for these kindnesses I thank you. And I shall end this talk as I ended last year's: I want to assure you that I'll give this task every ounce of energy I have. Just as you pursue excellence in your work on a daily basis, I'll strive to do the same.

Have a great academic year.

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