State of The College Address
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April 8, 2014
(as edited for posting)

I want to start by saying that I find the expression 'State of The College address' off-putting because of the inferences that can be drawn from it. 'State of the College' sounds like 'State of the Union', which means the president of a college must be an analogue of the president of the United States, which draws a false equivalence. We don't operate in the political sphere. For next year, I would like to rethink what we call this kind of exchange – some sort of town hall, perhaps? I'm obviously happy to stand in front of the college community and offer a summary of what I have seen during the year and what I see coming, but 'State of The College' feels odd to me.

So, to begin. My nine-month assessment of Columbia College Chicago is that at its core – at the most meaningful level of content, value, practice, interaction between faculty and students, student aspirations, and the progress that our students make towards those aspirations – I think we are doing very well, and in many cases extremely well. That said, we could always do better. Our fundamental challenge can be found in the divide between what we do and how we do it. The 'what' at Columbia is vibrant and strong. The 'how', on the other hand, is problematic in many cases, and that is something I would like to explore with you further.

First, though, I would like to talk about my general approach to my first year. If you read books about presidential leadership, you'll see that I'm not following the standard advice for the first year at all. In most circumstances, the president's primary responsibility is to serve as the public face of the institution. By that measure, I ought to be completely focused on reputation-building and new resource acquisition. But while I have done some of that work, I made a conscious decision when I arrived to spend the bulk of my first year looking internally. It seemed to me that the college's most pressing need was for me to be highly present to the community and to concentrate on learning the institution to a point where, over time, I could speak about it in an authentic voice. The only way to develop any level of authenticity is to interact with the community, and I have made every effort to do so at multiple levels. I started off trying to model a number of values that I believe are a part of the institutional culture, but perhaps need to be more a part of the institutional culture. I have tried to model accessibility. I have tried to model clarity of communication because I found that our institution, at least internally, tended towards a culture of opacity in communication. I have tried to model logical decision-making and an attendant willingness to explain the rationale behind decisions. That was in direct response to my perception of a widespread fear that the tendency of the administration at this college was to make arbitrary decisions. That of course is not correct, but given that I sensed it, I thought it was very important to counter it.

Another thing that I've tried to model this year with all of you is to habituate us to the value of speaking at the level of high concept – even while recognizing that we also have to talk about specifics – because we never will get anywhere if we only work through the details. And I have

to say that one of the most exciting aspects of learning about this college community has been its sustained willingness, across the board, to engage at that level. It has been very rewarding.

My primary focus has been on our student body because – and there must never be any doubt about this – the reason we are all here, the reason this college exists, is to deliver on the educational promise that we make to our students. We are not here to provide employment to this community; we provide employment to this community in order to fulfill that fundamental obligation. So it was very important for me to hear the voice of students in various settings. Some students have told me that I am not doing it enough. I've been told that there's not sufficient clarity at the student level about what I do with student feedback. I accept all of that.

The other thing I've learned to do over the first nine months of my presidency is to give myself permission not to propose an immediate solution to all of this institution's needs and challenges, because the needs are enormous. My desire to tend to those needs is, I think, equal in its scope, but I'm limited by what I can do, and I've had to learn to live with that frustration. I would love for things to move faster than they have. We've pushed as much as we can, but the reality is that the presidency is an ambiguous position. It can seem to many members of the community as though the president is all-powerful. But 'all-powerful' is a curious concept, because while that might theoretically be true, in actuality the presidency is the position with the greatest responsibility and, hopefully, the most influence. The job of a responsible college president is to try to influence change for the better. Mandates don't really work in higher education because of our commitment to the ideal of shared governance. The notion that everyone deserves to have a voice at the table in the decision-making process – which should not be confused with everyone having equal authority in the decision-making process –is a noble and important model, but it's also a model that introduces an element of inefficiency which slows things down. It can be very frustrating. Ultimately it's one of the greatest values of institutions of higher education, and a value that we robustly support at this institution, but it's also a process that I have had to negotiate, at times in ways that I have found challenging.

So that's an overview. I wanted to make it explicit that it was my conscious decision to be so present this first year. That pattern cannot characterize my entire presidency, because if I only stay in-house, I'm not doing a lot of the essential work that I was brought here to do.

Before I go into a general assessment of what I have seen so far and of some of the pieces that we have to begin to put in place to address some of our challenges, I'd like to keep us focused for a while on our mission, because what I'm coming to understand is that everything about how we will progress in the future, how we will determine value, how we will make decisions among competing goods, is going to be filtered through the lens of our mission. So let's come back to what I consider the core of Columbia College Chicago's mission statement, which is the idea that we are committed to preparing young people to author of the culture of their time. Most of us have heard those words so often that it is easy for them to sound unremarkable. It's helpful, therefore, to take a step back and look at higher education generally. If you randomly selected a hundred institutions of higher education, made a list of their mission statements, and invited people to match the statement to the institution, nobody would be able to do it because the statements would blur into each other. The reality of mission statements – and this is

intentional – is that they are general enough to allow for the greatest flexibility, and as a result they tend to be undifferentiated.

The first time I read Columbia College Chicago's mission statement, in contrast, I was really astonished. This is a college that calls itself an arts and media college, a designation that I cannot abide because it's false. Let's look at ourselves through the lens of an arts and media college. What does that imply? It implies a training model. It implies a focus almost entirely on skill development. It implies an education that posits a fairly direct connection between the acquisition of those skills and the achievement of professional success. Now we do prepare students to enter creative disciplines, but that's not the entirety of what we do, because our mission statement does not say, as you might expect, "We are committed to preparing the next generation of performers, makers, doers, scholars". That's the typical mission statement for schools in the arts and media college sector.

"Author the culture of their time", in contrast, moves away from a focus on perpetuating or advancing existing disciplines. We're talking about culture, and that's a profound difference. And we use the word "author" in an active sense, rather than saying what many institutions that are somewhat similar to us would say, which is, 'We are preparing young people to take their place in the field of...' – in other words, to producing and refining the next practitioner that the profession needs to keep turning out whatever it happens to turn out. We're saying something very different. We're describing our students as potential authors of culture. Once in a while I ask all of you to think about that statement, how outrageously bold, in some ways how impossible it is, and yet that is at the heart of our mission statement. It openly embraces the future. It suggests that part of the role of higher education, at least at this institution, goes beyond simply developing the skills that a student aspires to acquire. "Author[ing] the culture of their time" is, ideally, a lifelong endeavor. So this is a commitment to an educational model that we believe will help to guarantee lifelong success. Now we all know that success does not flow from the acquisition of a fixed set of skills in one's undergraduate education. Those of us who are a little bit older, if not necessarily any wiser, know that one of the fundamental realities of our lives is surprise, often much more surprise than we want. The only way to navigate a lifetime of surprise is with a certain set of capacities: the capacity to think, the capacity to recognize and respond to opportunity, the capacity to judge, and the capacity to change and adapt. These are the kinds of general learning competencies that are most commonly developed in a liberal arts setting.

In short, our mission requires us to recognize that our educational model is a hybrid, grounded in a liberal arts core that leads to specializations in the creative disciplines. We are not an arts and media college, and we are not a liberal arts college. We have not yet found the best, most succinct, and most exciting way to describe that model, which is one of our challenges.

That obligation, in turn, has some major implications. In recent years, there have been a number of internal efforts to establish where Columbia is headed and how we know what is important. Prior to that, during what was a period of prolonged growth, the institution became more and more comprehensive, establishing new programs and moving in new directions, all of which made sense at a time where there seemed to be unlimited demand for its offerings. Now

we are finding that this is not necessarily the case anymore. One of the natural fears in a community such as ours at a time like this, when decisions have to be made about the relative value of programs, is ' On what basis are those decisions going to be made?' And the most pronounced fear is that it's just going to be about money; some group is going to assess our programs, and they're going to single out the programs that make money for the college, and those will be listed on the chart of high value, and then they will take all the programs that lose money – and we know that some programs do lose money; that's part of the reality of these kinds of institutions – and they'll be on the chopping block. But that would be a disaster, because it has nothing to do with our mission. Instead, we will engage in the process of making decisions and determining relative value by asking the question, 'How does this program, how does this curriculum, how does this resource allocation decision, how does this hiring decision advance our ability to prepare our students to author the culture of their time?' I realize that this doesn't give us a lot of specifics, but it is important to start with the concept.

There are a couple of other obligations that our mission statement places on us. Let us come back to the notion of agency for young people, the idea that our students need to go out into the world believing that they own their own futures. Having been the president of a conservatory of music, a classical conservatory, I can tell you that I am quite familiar with the opposite extreme, a model where an educational process takes extraordinary gifted young people and raises their level of skill to an astonishing level, but also renders them helpless in the world, because they come to believe that success can only come from someone else's external validation of their ability and their worth. (By the way, for our students, success really does come from someone else noticing what you do and giving you an opportunity to do it, but that's not what I'm talking about.) If you go into the world with that attitude, you predict your own lack of success.

So how do we develop agency in young people? How do we develop a sense of ownership? The answer extends beyond attitude; this is not just about looking at the world a certain way. This is where the conversation about practical skills comes into play. We have an obligation – and this is going to be one of my soapbox topics – to make sure that all students who graduate from our college, whatever their field of study, acquire as part of their education an understanding of basic business skills, know something about marketing themselves in the world, and hopefully have had a significant entrepreneurial experience in which they take a concept and translate it into something that's real. Armed with those skills, a young person is much more likely to have an active relationship to their place in the world, because they have some sense of how to make that happen.

Another obligation placed on us by our mission involves an important conversation that we need to have as a community – and that we have initiated this year – about what we teach. Some of you have heard me use an expression that I made up – 'currency of curriculum'. I'm not even sure that it's proper English, but I like the way it sounds. We have to take this conversation seriously. If our academic major pathways are not in fact linking to current trends in professional and creative industry practice, we are not implementing our mission. Even more importantly, some of those major pathways should point to where we anticipate new forms of creative practice emerging in the future. Then we'll really be starting to get this right.

Finally, we have to think very carefully together about who is teaching this curriculum. I celebrate our faculty because I see their intense commitment and the profound interactions that take place between faculty and students. I hear about this constantly from students. Even a student who is really upset about something will find a way to let me know how much he or she loves the faculty here. It's a distinctive feature of our culture. But I'm going to throw out a challenge to this community. Historically, one of the narratives about the educational experience at Columbia College Chicago is that we have a large cadre of faculty, full-time and part-time, who are practitioners in their fields of creative expertise. That's already a powerful promise. I propose that we raise that bar to the next level. If we're committed to preparing young people to author the culture of their time, they need models for that. They need to see what creative entrepreneurship looks like. They need to see people who are not just perpetuating or making a living in their professions, but are advancing their professions, creating new fields of inquiry and discovery, taking existing ideas and recombining them in new ways. One of the things that I hope that we will engage in moving forward is an examination of our evaluation processes to highlight the value of new and innovative creative practice by our faculty, to reward it, to make sure that it becomes one of the lenses through which we examine how we build this remarkable faculty.

That's my current overview of mission. I cannot stress enough that our mission differentiates us in the world in a way that other institutions would kill for. I referred earlier to the lack of differentiation at the mission level in American higher education. This has created a mad scramble by institutions to differentiate themselves at the surface level, with campuses competing over who has the most gourmet meal plan or the newest and highest rock wall in their newest gymnasium. It's an escalation, it's warfare, and yet take all those things away and, except for their geographic location, those schools are just about the same. We need to think about this because the essence of our future depends upon our ability to successfully stake our claim about where we are unique and valuable in the world. It all comes back to mission.

Now let's start looking at the academic program. The core of everything in this college has always been, but has not always been understood to be, the academic enterprise. Some of you have heard me say this before, but when I first arrived, I was taken aback to hear some people describe us as a cultural organization. There are other people who in the past thought of us as some sort of real estate brokerage in the South Loop. It was curious to me to work at a school that was founded almost 125 years ago, that has always been a degree-granting institution, and that has the kind of distinguished faculty and extraordinary students that we have, and for there not to be a unanimity about what our organizing purpose is.

The first step in establishing the primacy of the academic program, then, is the hiring of Dr. Stan Wearden as senior vice president and provost, and making that the highest-ranking position in the administrative hierarchy after the president. That decision will be accompanied by a number of attendant changes. Enrollment management, admissions, degree evaluation, what we call academic records, and possibly some other functions will move to the provost's office. That way, we will begin to understand is that the academic enterprise is the core of the institution, and everything else supports that core. That does not mean that other functions

have become less important, merely that those functions must be placed in the proper relationship with each other. The mission demands it.

Several other important high-level conversations need to take place with Dr. Wearden's arrival and this refocusing on the primacy of the academic program. One of the most significant of those conversations is about academic structure. I am not trying to plant a directive in Dr. Wearden's ear about what I expect him to do, but many of you have heard me say this before: I do not believe that our existing three-college model serves the school well. I also think that the distribution of departments within the schools could be reconsidered and that the departments themselves may not be the appropriate classifications of study at this institution.

In my mind – even though I don't yet know how this would work – I see a very different model in which you build the curriculum around the core curriculum. I would like for there to be an intensive conversation about the quality and relevance of the core curriculum and of the first-year seminar, which is an extraordinary opportunity that we have not taken full advantage of yet. The core curriculum is where our collective commitment to our students resides, because it's at the core level that we guarantee those lifelong competencies and capacities. Then I think our majors should be a ring around the core. Surrounding that ring could be graduate study, although right now it would be a thin ring, which is a problem. And then there's an outer ring which represents the institution's ability to connect students from graduation to early professional success – that's the student success ring. What I like about this model is that there's no predefined path. The only movement is from center to the outside.

Now if we are going to fulfill our commitment to our students to embed the essence of what we teach in the core curriculum, we need to talk about what the desired learning outcomes of the core curriculum are. We live in a world where there tends to be a huge gap between what people say they would like to do and what they actually do, and it's nowhere more evident in higher education than in the conversation about general education. You hear a lot of talk around the country about learning outcomes and the need for progressive thinking, and then you look at the core curriculum models and it's 'take two from column A, take one from column B' – it's the cafeteria model. I feel as though we have an extraordinary opportunity here, especially given the specificity of our majors.

I will add that one of the things that attracted me to Columbia was the first-year seminar, the opportunity embedded in the required curriculum to introduce all of our students to a common experience. I don't know what that experience should be, although I hope that at least part of it involves Chicago. But the opportunity is a remarkable one, and having been a dean who tried to introduce something similar at another institution, I can tell you that it's politically impossible to shoehorn a required seminar for all freshmen into a curriculum that doesn't already include it. But we have it and we have to think about the power of having it.

One last thing about my conversations with Dr. Wearden. We talked at length about whether I believed that Columbia College Chicago was open to more than the usual incremental adjustments of curricular structure. My response was that I think the sky is the limit at this school right now. In my interactions over the past nine months, I haven't come across many

people who say to me that the current structure is the right one, we love it this way, it allows us to do everything that we've dreamed of doing in our lives. One of the things that our current structure undermines, moreover, is a college-level commitment to promoting collaborative activity. Many of you have heard me speak of my belief in this idea of complex collaboration. Working together in highly diverse teams to solve multi-faceted problems is a critically important early twenty-first-century competency which I think we have an obligation to guarantee that our students acquire. It's happening now at the program level because of certain faculty members' willingness to navigate around obstacles or certain students' perseverance in demanding that it happen, but it's happening in spite of us, which makes no sense.

Before I go on to talk about functional administrative areas, two things. The danger that I accepted in my approach to this first year as president was that of establishing ambiguous relationships with the institution. Recently I have started to sense that we may be getting close to that danger zone, because I'm picking up confusion from other people about 'why does the president want talk to me?' Let me give you an example. Because of my deep and abiding interest in curricular issues, I convened a lunch with a small group of faculty who have been working on the conversation about learning outcomes, the core curriculum, and the first-year seminar. I started by saying, "I want everyone in this room to understand that there's nothing official about this lunch. I'm not creating an official group to make any decisions. I'm looking to you to help me understand what has been discussed to date." We had a great conversation. We also agreed that there was no reason to have a second conversation until the next provost had arrived. Well, about two weeks later I got a call from someone who is sitting in the room today, asking me about my new presidential initiative around the first-year seminar, and I realized, that's what the danger is, the danger of good intentions. Here I naively thought that if I were 100% explicit about what something wasn't, everybody would believe me, but of course I'm the president, so I must have an ulterior motive. And the idea that the president and the administration must have an ulterior motive is very much embedded in the current culture of our institution, and I accept that. So my goal over the next three months is to step back, prepare for the transition of provosts, and begin to focus my attention externally.

Another idea with which I want to frame this overview – and it's very important that we all understand it – is that change is inevitable in institutions such as ours. That applies to me as much as it does to anyone else. When I accepted the presidency of Columbia College Chicago, I did so knowing that my value to this institution was time-limited. I hope it's not a short period of time, but that's just reality. All of us who take these positions, whether it's as president or provost or vice president, are on a value clock, and eventually that clock runs out. We are stewards of institutions that were founded long before we arrived and that will continue to exist long after we are gone. Change therefore is inevitable. It is not a sign that something is badly awry, and it is not an implicit criticism of a person who is replaced by someone new. It's just the way these institutions must develop.

That's a useful transition to my observation that we have work to do on our operations. Let me start with enrollment and bring you up to date on statistics. Right now our applications for the fall of 2014 are more or less flat compared to last year. We're a little disappointed by that. The increased investment in recruitment activities seems to be paying off in a much higher level of

interest among juniors who are thinking about the fall after that, but we don't yet know if we will be able to convert that interest into an increase in the number of applications. So that's one of our challenges.

The current lack of application growth is counter-balanced by a rise of about 3% in freshman-to-sophomore retention. Retention is a key indicator of institutional success and the most important unsung factor in budgetary health. Institutions tend to focus so intently on the recruitment of new students – and that's particularly true right now at Columbia College Chicago – that people forget that you need to pay attention to retention statistics as well. Our current retention rate is about 66-67%. My goal over time is to move that figure to around 80%. Once we hit 80%, we're in the right ballpark.

As an aside, someone asked me today what are the retention rates of the most prestigious institutions in the country? Well, they're around 99-100%. You'll never hear me suggest that we need to be at 99-100% to declare success, because that's a different model. That's a model where you rigidly and intentionally control the entry point, and by doing so you predict what the outcome will be. That's not what we do here. And that gets us to another critically important, and differentiating, element of our mission, that of diversity. Let's return to the world of institutions that focus on the creative disciplines. Their general attitude is, "we recruit the 'best of the best'". Again, it's the idea that if you control the entry point, what happens between matriculation and graduation becomes much easier to execute and helps you to guarantee certain favorable statistical outcomes. Were we to move in that direction, we would come to a point relatively quickly where we would cease to be able to implement our mission.

Think about the words "author the culture of their time" again. While we don't know what that will mean in practice, we do know that what we put in place will likely be produced through a collision and interaction of as many different perspectives, ways of knowing, ways of being, and ways of understanding as possible. So the diversity conversation at this institution is not about appearances. It's firmly embedded in the mission and in our ability to implement the mission. One thing I should add is that it is a point of personal pride to me that we have students who are taking the existing conversation about diversity and demanding that we as an institution join them in a much deeper-level conversation. It's one thing to talk about the diversity of our population – that's comfortable for just about everybody – but the diversity of curriculum content is a little bit more discomforting and yet incredibly necessary if we're going to fully implement our mission.

The challenges in admission and enrollment are not just about numbers. One of our fundamental challenges is to determine whether we as an institution can identify a way to assess an applicant's likelihood of success at Columbia College Chicago. Can we in fact go beyond relying on standard statistical indicators? I don't know how we assess creative potential, for example, but I think we have to give it a try, because one of the ways we can move towards increased selectivity without losing our commitment to diversity is by identifying the factors that help to determine success at this institution.

Next, let's talk about finances. You all know that we started the year with a projected $3.5 million operating budget deficit. With a lot of people's goodwill and participation, we're reducing that deficit slowly and are trying to get to balance, mainly by identifying pockets of discretionary funding across the institution that for the time being are not essential. My biggest financial challenge this year can be summed up in the number 3. In 282 days, I have worked with three different chief financial officers. I worked with one CFO for five weeks. I worked with one CFO for two months, and now I'm working with my third CFO, who is wonderful, by the way. This has been very frustrating for me personally because as president I would like to know a lot more than I currently do about the financial structure and operations of the institution. I thought that by now I would have more traction in this area than I do.

We are searching for a permanent CFO. I'm looking for someone who believes, as I do, in the power of transparency in the budgeting process, because that is the norm in higher education. I had a very intense conversation with students recently about their concern over the lack of budgeting transparency, and I fully agree with that. Historically, the way in which we have budgeted at this institution is opaque. If there is a principle involved, it has been an archival principle, a backwards-looking principle of perpetuating existing resource allocation decisions, with minor incremental adjustments made on a 'squeaky wheel' basis. Another quality that I'm looking for in the next CFO is someone who thinks in terms of multi-year planning and strategy – we have got to break out of this year-to-year mindset – and also someone who will help push the culture of our institution. One thing that is interesting to me about our school right now is that collectively we don't fully embrace the notion that all decisions, including academic decisions, have financial consequences. We sometimes operate in a state of dissociation from our own financial reality, and that's a mindset that we have to change.

As for communications, I would describe the landscape of communications at Columbia College Chicago as the most decentralized model I've ever seen, to the point where it seems as if every one of us in this room is his or her own director of communications for the college. There's very little coordination of message at this institution. I think it probably stems from a fear within the institutional culture, developed over time, that to centralize is to limit agency, to limit the individual voice. But that doesn't have to be true. Successful centralization is about focusing and then supporting the whole. So right now what I encounter is a great deal of confusion about who we are in the community. I hear that we are an open access institution, with the implication being that we are a low-quality institution whose programs lack rigor, and that we care about providing opportunity to students but not about student degree completion and achievement. In addition, there exists a divide between the stories that we use to characterize our institution and the stories that we use to recruit new students, and they don't match. I know that there's been a lot of work on developing a new website, but we're still hamstrung by the existing website, which doesn't really serve us well. There's a wider issue of the communications function not clearly serving the college's needs, but at the same time the college's needs have not been clearly defined. So we have some work to do.

However, my greatest operational concern is about the state of technology at our institution. That applies to the infrastructure that supports daily operations and the infrastructure that supports teaching and learning. We're well behind, not at the level of individuals or specific

programs, but as a college. One would think that a college with our mission would be characterized by a robust technology infrastructure that supports the development of new ways of making, new ways of performing, new ways of being, new ways of teaching, and new ways of learning, but that's not really true here.

My current solution for finance, communication, and information technology starts with us bringing in outside consultants to conduct a comprehensive review of these areas. I know that there's something of a cultural distaste for consultants at this institution, but that only tells me that they haven't been deployed properly. Consultants can be very valuable. We've brought in the Huron Group to examine what we're doing in finance and in IT because they have worked for 450 institutions of higher education nationally and have great expertise in these areas. They are interviewing a broad cross-section of our community to assess who is involved in finance and information technology at the institution, who does what, who has decision-making authority, and whether there are redundancies in the systems. I fully intend to implement any recommendations that make sense to me.

Finally, development, with which we've had some stops and starts this year. We no longer refer to that office as institutional advancement, and I want to explain why. In higher education, institutional advancement is the department that encompasses development (fundraising), alumni relations, external relations, government relations (if appropriate), and, often, a piece of communications. I like that model, but it requires a certain level of operational sophistication that we don't currently have. So I've decided to simplify the department's charge to address our main concerns, which is that we have to raise more money and do a much better job of connecting to our alumni, who are a great treasure that we have ignored for a long time. So we have converted the existing institutional advancement office into the development office.

Philosophically, too, we are moving from an events-based strategy to a major gifts strategy, and I want to explain what that means for those of you who have not engaged in fundraising. An institution uses events to cultivate relationships and friendships, which is fundamental to raising money. The problem, if you stay in that mode, is that you never raise any money because you never ask people for it. (A basic adage in fundraising holds that the main reason that people don't give is because no one asks them.) So you put on wonderful events that make people happy but cost you money, and then you wonder why results don't improve. Major gifts, in contrast, is all about segmenting the pool of potential donors and devising targeted strategies to draw a donor closer to the institution, ask him or her for a gift, return the donor to the end of the line, continue the cultivation process, and then ask for a bigger gift the next time. It's a perpetual process, it's not rocket science, and it has to be done. So that's where we're moving. Some of you have heard me say that in this year's operating budget, the line item for fundraising revenue, in a budget of over $217 million, is $200,000. Now we've raised considerably more than that, but the institution budgeted the $200,000 figure because that's all it was confident of being able to raise. That's going to change.

As I enter my second year, you should expect that my focus will shift in a much more external direction, although I will not be any less connected to the institution. I will devote my time and energy to building the institution's reputation and on raising money. I have a great deal of

experience as a fundraiser that I have not really put to use this year. In terms of functional areas, I will hammer away at improvements in communications and IT. Stan Wearden and I are going to be working in an intense partnership, although I've already promised him that we are not going to demand that he take on everything in one month. Stan will also need his period of adjustment. My goal is to keep bringing us back to our mission, to make sure that the world knows who we are because of our very powerful commitment to our students, and then over time to help us realize the mission more fully and ensure that we have the resources to make the college a better and stronger place.

Finally, I want to talk about my two current facilities priorities. The first priority, the facility that this campus needs more than anything else – and this is my current thought about how best to use the Johnson Building – is a student center, hub, and gathering place. It needs to be a place for students to hang out with each other, study together, do formal collaboration, engage with the community, and experiment with new technology, all in a space that feels safe to them. There has to be food, the building needs to have extended hours, and if possible it should be a one-stop shop for student services, so that students don't have to bounce around campus like pinballs to get basic tasks done. The second priority has to do with our performing spaces, which are inadequate for an institution of this quality that has so much of its student and faculty activity based in performance. That became clear to me last semester when I attended a remarkably creative theatre performance that was held in the most extraordinarily inadequate space. The space was transformed and was made effective through an application of creative will, but no amount of creativity could address the long line of waiting students who were turned away from the show because the venue could only accommodate seventy-five people. I also remember being told that the Getz Theater's seating capacity was misleading because you can't hear anything if you sit under the balcony or upstairs, and anyway it has no backstage area. I'm not suggesting that we need a gleaming new performing arts center, but we must address the issue of a performance space without falling into the common trap of building for today and yesterday and failing to anticipate tomorrow's needs. I should add that if we are going to build a performance space, we've got to factor in students' need for flexible, multi-purpose performance spaces as well, not just formal performance spaces.

That's a summary of what I'm thinking about. You need to know that I feel encouraged on a daily basis by my sense of the remarkable value of this institution. There are days when I want to cast myself out of the window because the way we do things seems so bizarre, but at the same time there is nothing that is not working at this institution that cannot be improved upon. I've heard a lot of people say that we are unique. That's not true. Our mission is distinctive, but our challenges are challenges that many other institutions face, although perhaps not so many of them at the same time. Everything can be improved, and so over time you will see me bringing new expertise to the college. When I do, I ask you to not interpret this as a dishonoring of what has occurred in the past. As I said earlier, each of us has our time here, and for each of us – and I'm talking now at an administrative level – that time eventually runs out.

Thank you so much for giving me your attention.