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State of the University Address 2012

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Office of the President

Mary B. Marcy

State of the University Address 2012

Good afternoon, and welcome to the start of the academic year at Dominican for 2012 – 2013! I am so pleased to open a new academic year at Dominican. Today we will introduce you to new colleagues, provide your first introduction to our entering class, update you on some work over the summer, and envision the future.

First, I'd like you to meet some new colleagues. As you know, we have been building a strong leadership team at Dominican. Last spring we discussed the process for identifying a new Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. This summer the search committee, chaired by Dean Pitchford, staffed by Jenn Kregel, and represented by Doug Carlston, John Kennedy, Christian Dean, Domingo Ramirez, Marianne Stickel, Bill Phillips, Chris Leeds, Suresh Appavoo, Maggie Louie, Giulia Welch, and Jody Hoppe, worked diligently through a strong slate of candidates.

At the end of this process, we reached consensus, and today I am proud to announce that Steven Weisler, a Professor of Linguistics at Hampshire College, will be the next Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Dominican. Dr. Weisler received his doctorate in linguistics from Stanford University. He has had a distinguished career at Hampshire where he has served as Dean of Academic Development, Dean of Cognitive Science, and Dean of Enrollment and Assessment, among other roles. In addition to his work at Hampshire College, Dr. Weisler has earned an enviable national reputation for his collaborative work among liberal arts colleges, for his leadership in securing grant funding from major higher education foundations, and for his pioneering work in tying assessment to student learning. Dr. Weisler could not be here today, but he did join the faculty yesterday and will occasionally be on campus this fall as he manages his transition from the east coast. He will join us full time in January.

This summer we also conducted an extensive national search for a Senior Assistant to the President. Katie Bell, Francoise LePage, Marty Nelson, Mojgan Behmand, Julia Van der Ryn, and Avery Jaffe served on this committee, which was staffed by Sarita Purece. This position, funded by a generous gift from a Trustee, will have lead responsibility for coordinating our engaged learning initiatives, as well as serving as a member of the President's Cabinet and working closely with me. As I announced in a campus email, I am thrilled that Hanna Rodriguez Farrar has accepted this position.

Dr. Rodriguez Farrar joins us from Brown University, where she served as the Assistant to President Ruth Simmons. She holds a doctorate in Art History from Brown, where she served as the President of the Alumni Association and also served on the Corporation of Brown University. Dr. Rodriguez Farrar is presently completing her second doctorate, working toward an EdD at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. Her intellect, energy, and insight will be a great asset to Dominican and to my leadership. Like Dr. Weisler, Dr. Rodriguez Farrar will make a few trips to campus this fall, and will join us full time in January. But unlike Dr. Weisler, she is here today. Hanna, could you please stand?

Last spring we conducted a national search for a new Dean of Health and Natural Sciences. When we began this search, some were concerned that the combination of health programs and natural sciences might make it difficult to find a leader with the knowledge, understanding, and credibility to lead all the departments within HNS. But then we met Ching-Hua Wang. She holds a doctorate in medicine from Beijing Medical College and a doctorate in Immunology from Cornell University. Her expertise as a research scientist, her knowledge of the health professions, her commitment to students, and her collaborative spirit have guided her career, and have already made a discernible and positive impression on colleagues since she began at Dominican in July. Ching, since your transition happened over the summer and not everyone had the chance to meet you, would you please stand and be welcomed by the community?

We are about to begin a search for a new Vice President for Advancement. We are very fortunate that Nancy Cable, who served as the Acting President of Bates College during their presidential search this past year, is helping us with this transition. Dr. Cable has extensive experience as a leader in higher education with specific expertise in development and strategic organizational positioning. She will be on campus one week a month this fall to work with our advancement team, and will also be the lead consultant in our search for a new Vice President. The search committee is chaired by John Baworowsky. Nancy, would you please stand?

Finally, we have also begun a search for a new Athletic Director. This search is being led by Michele Hinken, and I am pleased to announce that in the interim, Sharon Takeda has agreed to serve as Acting Athletics Director for the campus.

And because our mission is centered on students, I'd like John Baworowsky and John Kennedy to tell you a little about our entering class.

Over the summer I had the opportunity to reflect on my first year at Dominican. I thought about the day in March of 2011 when I was introduced on this stage as your new president, and the warmth and generosity of your welcome. I thought about inauguration week last fall, and the gathering of Board members, faculty, students, staff, alumni, and Sisters who came together to hold the history and the future of this institution. I thought about the community conversations we had, sometimes with PowerPoint's and discussion, sometimes over wine and food at the president's residence, sometimes simply walking on campus. I thought about the discussions I had with alumni and the ways in which Dominican had profoundly and positively altered their lives. I thought about the meetings I had with Bay Area leaders, and the enormous potential Dominican has in this most vital of communities.

I thought about having dinner with the ASDU leaders and their concern for opportunities for both present and future students. And I thought about another dinner with the Dominican Sisters, where we laughed over the stops and starts inevitable to the evolution of this institution, even as we looked to the future.

These reflections made me think about what is distinctively Dominican, and about Dominican's place within American higher education. Despite concerns about cost, about access, and about outcomes, higher education is still the single most effective avenue to personal and social transformation in the world. And the United States still boasts the most diverse and substantial higher education system ever created. Dominican occupies a particular and important place within that framework.

There are many types of higher education institutions. Community colleges and regional public universities offer general education, training and student access; research institutions change the way we live and work through advanced study supported by premier research faculty and facilities. Dominican is a private university that offers the best of the liberal arts combined with rigorous professional education. Ours is a vitally important mission.

It is vitally important because, while higher education is indeed a means to personal opportunity, it is not merely an avenue to employment. Only a personalized education that integrates the liberal arts and the professions consistently transforms student lives.

The best of undergraduate education, the model on which Dominican will build, develops skills of both profession and citizenship, invites students to find meaning in work and in culture, and asks students and alumni to contribute to our workplace and our communities.

The most crucial aspect of this work is the integration of the professions and the liberal arts. History, data, and common sense tell us that the separation of liberal arts education from applicable skills is a false dichotomy, one both unwise and unfounded. Employers consistently say that they want to hire graduates who can write and speak clearly, who are innovative and critical thinkers, and who are sophisticated and comfortable with diversity.

Our type of education is sorely needed in this society. In his recent book *Twilight of the Elites*, Christopher Hayes argues that the meritocracy envisioned by Jefferson and sought through greater diversity and access has not yielded a more just society. Instead, he suggests that greater access to opportunity has led to greater corruption, as individuals at the top of society seek to protect their gains and limit opportunity for the next generation.

His rather dismal assessment is accurate if – but only if -- meritocracy is defined purely as individual success, and if higher education is designed only for personal advancement. If we believe higher education is an avenue merely to individual gain, then we will graduate students who care little about their communities, lack a commitment to a larger purpose, and focus only on material achievement. But if we assume that higher education offers the means to find both voice and vocation, personal meaning and practical skills, social good and individual achievement, then we will serve our students, our nation, and the world in a much more profound manner.

This is not an isolated view. It is not an idealistic view, or a naïve view, or one that neglects the market of higher education. In fact, it is a view corroborated by extensive research on effective higher education practice, and embraced by today's students. Contemporary students clearly understand that higher education offers a route to greater prosperity. These same students also expect their university experience to offer a pathway to a life of meaning. Recent findings from UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute showed that, for the first time in 25 years, more than 50% of first year university students identified "developing a meaningful philosophy of life" as an important or very important goal of their college experience. And research by pollster John Zogby has found that a growing segment of United States citizens, driven by the traditional college age population, believe living a 'meaningful life' is central to the realization of the American dream.

Today's college students are more globally-minded, less interested in work as a means only to material success, more willing to find middle ground on issues that have historically led to bi-modal responses, and entirely comfortable with differences in race, gender, and sexual orientation. They hunger for an education that liberates, that frees the mind from the vagaries and prejudices of received opinion and limited life experiences. And they seek an education that offers a path to an identifiable, fulfilling, rewarding profession. In short, today's students expect the best of liberal education and the best of professional education. At Dominican, we will deliver that education.

This is why Dominican's notion of engaged learning offers so much promise. It integrates the best of the professions and the best of the liberal arts, creating what the Association of American Colleges and Universities calls the 'liberally educated professional.' This vision fits a national need, as well as individual aspirations. And there is no reason we should not be the premiere such institution in the region and even the nation.

In fact, Dominican is perfectly positioned to take a leadership role in the effort. No institution in the country has yet reinvented itself around our particular notion of engaged learning. By asking students to embrace a common rigorous first year experience, by expecting them to excel in the classroom and apply those lessons through service learning, leadership, study abroad, research, and internship programs, by challenging them to integrate the life of the mind with a life of engagement, by asking them to think and to serve, we will be providing students with the best of Dominican and the best of American higher education.

In the words of the poet Wallace Stevens, we will ask our students and ourselves to find that place

*Where the voice that is in us makes a true response
Where the voice that is great within us rises up.*

Dominican will craft a model of education that offers both a path to employment and a belief in the value of learning; a set of useful skills and the ability to find value in something beyond oneself; a sense of accomplishment and a commitment to serve.

I have both confidence and energy for our work. It stems from my experience in learning this campus and its people. Think, for a minute, about what we have accomplished.

From an idea of transparent organization and a belief in accountability, we have developed a model of Responsibility Centered Management unique to Dominican. That model was put to the test in the creation of a new budget for this fiscal and academic year, a collaborative process that focused on our strategic priorities and engaged all constituencies.

But it was not only the process of the budget creation that was new. Last fall I told you that there are three ways to strategically manage a budget: reallocation of existing funds, fundraising for new efforts, and managing each year so that a surplus is available for further investment. We have now had a year to implement that philosophy. In the budget for this new fiscal year, we have reallocated \$1.3 million from central administration to the academic core and the student experience. We saw an increase in fundraising of 18%, including new gifts dedicated to engaged learning and to scholarship funds.

And we managed last year's operating budget precisely as planned, finishing with our contingency intact and a modest predicted surplus. In addition to our work with RCM and the budget, I see many other avenues of growth and opportunity that give me confidence in this institution. Through the leadership and generosity of the Board of Trustees we are about to open a state of the art athletics complex that will serve student athletes, club sports, intramurals, and the San Rafael community for years to come. And our student athletes have received the PAC West Academic Achievement Award three years in a row – in fact, every year we have been a member of the PAC West conference we have won the Academic Achievement Award.

Most remarkable has been the work by and for students, in and out of the classroom. The Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance program not only receives national and international recognition for its work, but every one of the 2012 recipients of the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree graduated with honors.

Through both internal strategic initiatives funds and external grants we have built a robust service learning program with the Canal District.

Faculty in Big History have presented their ground-breaking curricular and pedagogical work at conferences nationally and internationally, marking Dominican as a leading higher-education institution in the development of this young intellectual field.

Meanwhile, in the School of Health and Natural Sciences every student participated in an engaged learning activity as we define it at Dominican. HNS faculty and students studied and conducted research in Sweden, Costa Rica, Uganda, Tanzania, and South Africa. And the faculty of HNS secured more than \$400,000 in new grant funding while hiring Dominican's first endowed professor.

The Venture Greenhouse, just opened last year, is already a hub for North Bay entrepreneurs and a learning lab for Dominican students. This past year more than 50 students from across the university worked on projects involving Venture Greenhouse clients.

The School of Business and Leadership has been developing high potential managers through its Leadership Certificate program. In addition to a thriving set of open cohort offerings, a customized version of the program is now being delivered to County of Marin managers.

And ours is one of only 30 business schools from across the nation selected to participate in an Aspen Institute consortium on "rethinking undergraduate business education."

The School of Education and Counseling Psychology has developed a partnership with Coleman Elementary to become a professional development school, while expanding our expertise in work with autistic children and adults. SECP has also nurtured a relationship with Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in South Africa, one that expands our cultural understanding while offering new opportunities to an important institution in that still-evolving democracy.

And in the midst of this work, you created a lasting Dominican experience for our students. Last spring we celebrated the commencement of 313 undergraduates and 162 graduate students, students who are now prepared to take their Dominican education and values into their communities and the world.

Think of what we have done, and now imagine what we will do. As requested by the Committee on Presidential Debates, this academic year we will be the first U. S. University to lead a discussion of the electoral process with partner institutions in Thailand, Greece, and South Africa. We will continue our work with the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, building connections that link students and ideas across traditional borders. And we will expand our presence in Big History.

And of greatest importance, we will move from discussion to action in our vision for engaged learning. We will explore how to create partnerships that build on Dominican's strengths and expand our reach in the Bay Area and beyond. We will structure our learning beyond the classroom so it is tied directly to curricular offerings, and ensure that the experiences are integrated and lasting.

We will plan for the physical renovation of campus that provides space for engaged learning, celebrates our heritage, and – in the words of numerous campus conversations last year – ‘brings the beauty of the outside in.’ We will celebrate and learn from the diversity of this campus, continue our work toward a more sustainable community, and focus and strengthen our international efforts.

This is why I believe Dominican has a distinctive role in American higher education. Because of our history and the values that we inherited from the Sisters. Because of what

we have already done and the lives we have already changed. Because of our belief that education is about both an individual and a social good. It is this history, it is this vision, it is this commitment that will allow us to serve as a model of the best of liberal and professional education.

Several years ago, Emory University launched a partnership with the Tibetan government in exile. They focused on language, heritage, reflection and international exchange. At the ceremonies inaugurating that effort, the Dalai Lama spoke of the importance of education to a life of meaning; he discussed this intersection between the life of the mind and a life of engagement. He concluded simply: “The compassionate heart,” he said, “is teachable.” Students come to Dominican seeking knowledge and meaning, learning and engagement. We will develop their hearts and minds through a model of engaged learning that embraces the best of their potential, and calls on the best of our skills. Of course it is important work. And it is my honor to lead you in this endeavor.

Welcome to the 2012-2013 academic year at Dominican!