

## PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL ADDRESS

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### Introduction

Welcome to the 2007/2008 Academic Year at Miami! I am delighted to have this opportunity to share with you some reflections on the past year and, even more importantly, some ideas regarding our future. You may have noticed that this gathering has changed in two important ways. First, we have changed the venue to make it more inclusive of the entire campus community, and, second, it has been re-titled as the “President’s Annual Address” rather than the “State of the University Address” to allow for a greater emphasis on our future.

In the brief time we have together today, I would like to highlight a few of the many exceptional accomplishments of the past year, present a working draft of what I hope will become Miami’s Five-Year Strategic Goals, and end with reflections on how all of this comes together to define our future.

For Valerie and me personally, this past year has been a year of wonderful discovery and exploration—new people, new places, new events, and new ideas. Most importantly, it was a year of peeling back the layers that make up Miami and discovering the richness of what makes this such a special place. Last year, we were fortunate to spend time not only on the Oxford Campus, but also on the Hamilton and Middletown regional campuses as well. And we were privileged to be able to visit Miami’s Luxembourg campus and the Miami Tribe in Oklahoma.

Of course it has been reassuring to find out that what we thought we had seen from afar is in fact what we have found after arriving here. Of course, there have been a few surprises, and not all of them have been pleasant (such as finding a nest of mice eating part of our car’s engine). But overwhelmingly, the surprises have been about discovering a place even better than we imagined it—better because of the warmth and commitment of our staff and faculty, the energy and creativity of our students, and the passion of our alums. I believe more firmly than ever that one of the most significant elements of Miami’s success is how deeply we value community. It runs through every fiber of our university, providing an environment that encourages individual success through collaboration and support for each other.

So in that spirit, let me take a moment to highlight some of our accomplishments of the past year. Although these all have already been noted and perhaps even celebrated, it is valuable to spend a moment reflecting on the excellence and progress each of these represent. I use the word “represent” deliberately, as there is not possibly enough time to touch on all of the terrific accomplishments that have been achieved this past year.

## The Year Past

We began last year with the announcement of the Miami Access Initiative. This fall nearly 200 new students have joined us through the Initiative, met by a committed group of faculty and staff mentors. It was a year in which we dedicated a new engineering building and a new Goggin Ice Arena, rededicated McGuffey and Phillips Halls, broke ground for the new home of the Farmer School of Business, opened a residential site in Over-the-Rhine, and announced plans for a new learning center at the Voice of America site in West Chester.

We launched the Top 25 Initiative to transform how we teach and learn, the Howe Writing Center to transform how we learn to write and use writing to learn, the Confucius Institute to encourage the learning of Chinese language and culture, while adding Korean and Hindi to our already impressive array of language opportunities. It was a year in which we created and launched SaturdaySelect and Degree Power Schedules at Hamilton and Middletown to provide more effective access to students, developed a new parental leave policy, created a new category of professionally licensed or clinical faculty, and implemented an unprecedented program of coordinated computer purchasing (the Big Buy) that saved hundreds of thousands of dollars. Wow! If I could only get that kind of deal with the Bass Pro Shop.

It was a year that saw Jack Kirby win the Bancroft Prize in history for his book, *Mockingbird Song: Ecological Landscapes of the South*, Susan Paulson win a Fulbright grant, Rodney Coates selected as the 2007 recipient of the Joseph Himes Award for a Career of Distinguished Scholarship by the Association of Black Sociologists (ABS), Thomas Klak named as the 2007 recipient of the Carl O. Sauer Distinguished Scholarship Award by the Conference of Latin American Geographers for his career contributions to Latin American geography, and Hardy Eshbaugh receive the 2007 Distinguished Economic Botanist Award by the Society for Economic Botany.

Miami saw another record for funded research with just under \$25 million in funds that support everything from producing racial and ethnically specific strategies to manage diabetes, as Jennifer Kinney and her collaborators did, to studying the effects of gravity on growing plants in space, as John Kiss and his team did; from improving the effectiveness of 240 science teachers and principals, as Jennifer Blue, Terry McCollum, and Kevin Stinson did, to exceeding Department of Energy benchmarks for hydrogen storage, as Hongcai Zhou and his team accomplished.

Not to be outdone, students Franklin Grace III, Annemarie Spadafore, and Justin Wilmes also won Fulbright grants. Teresa Kim, a double major in political science and East Asian languages and literature, received a \$20,000 Boren Scholarship for study abroad, Alexander Berrebi, a senior microbiology major, and Christine Hajdin, a senior biochemistry major, were selected as Beckman Scholars. Eric W. Frey, a junior physics major, was awarded a Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship and recent music alumnus William Sauerland was named a Marshall Scholar. It was a year in which two architecture students, James Diewall and Michael Frederick, won a prestigious

competition (and \$25,000) for airport design, the Mock Trial team won the Ohio Valley Regional Championship on the way to a sixth place national finish, and a student group, working through the social entrepreneurship program, put together a stunning business plan to take Edun Live shirts to campuses in order to support economic growth in South Africa. It was a year when once again Miami's six-year graduation rate exceeded the predicted graduation rate by 12 percentage points, one of only five universities with such a large degree of over performance in the top 100 colleges and universities ranked by *U.S. News and World Report*. And once again, Miami was in the top 20 universities in the country in the number of students studying abroad.

It was a year in which our basketball team won the conference championship game with an electrifying last second shot, our hockey team won its very first NCAA tournament game, and our women's synchronized skating team placed second in THE WORLD--the first time a U.S. skating team had ever even won a medal. The team was also awarded the Michelle Kwan Trophy as winners of the Readers' Choice award for Skater(s) of the Year, while Coach Vicky Korn won the National Women's Figure Skating Coach of the Year award. And since I announced the formation of Team Rowdybush at last year's address, it is only fair that I report that our broomball team did in fact storm through the beginning broomball division with an impressive 1 and 11 record.

And last but certainly not least, we set a new record in private giving – over \$50 million in cash contributions – and launched the 100 Professorships and Chairs campaign.

In other words, it was quite a year! As exciting as these accomplishments are, the coming year looks even better--if we have the determination and the focus to make it so. In that spirit, I would like to turn to the future and share some thoughts and goals that I believe will take us to higher levels of success and accomplishment.

## **Setting Goals**

Over the past several years, Miami has worked hard to establish and achieve the goals established in the "First in 2009" initiative. We have looked to our peers to set benchmarks to measure our progress and we have focused energy on some of our most difficult challenges, and most promising opportunities, that we face. During this past year we concluded this effort with a reflective analysis focused on how these individual efforts together have impacted the university. The final report, recently printed in the *Miami Report*, provides a compelling description of what Miami is and, even more importantly, what Miami is becoming. The core message is simple and powerful, "A single phrase" the committee wrote, "captures the essence of our vision for the future: The Engaged University." This phrase may not be unique to Miami, but I believe that *no university is better situated to live that charge, and in so doing, to achieve extraordinary success.*

To achieve that success, though, we must continue to set goals that will keep us energized and focused. In May, the Board of Trustees held a retreat to assess where we are and where we want to be. In preparation for this meeting, the President's Executive

Committee drafted a set of strategic goals to provide a sharper vision of where we want to go and what it will take to get there. Let me be very clear in emphasizing that these goals do not present new directions for Miami. Rather they are intended to provide a more coherent and focused road map for extending, and stretching, what we are already doing.

During the fall semester, I am requesting that all of us take time to review these goals and that every unit provide, by January, a “localized” version of the goals, that is a set of unit goals that mesh with or expand on the University-wide goals outlined here. We will then use the unit responses to review and finalize the five year strategic goals in January or February.

Even more importantly, I am asking that each one of us review these goals on a personal level and ask how we can make Miami better in what we do every day. I know that at first glance this might seem like yet another planning exercise, and you might be thinking, “Haven’t we done this before?” To a degree that is true. But the need to think strategically never ceases as the world around us changes at an increasingly challenging rate, and we continually grow in our potential to excel. In my experience, whether it is how we teach, how we involve students in our scholarship, how we respond to students and parents, how we make the campus more beautiful or run more efficiently, or how we provide core services, knowing what we are trying to achieve together will increase the impact of what we do individually.

There is not enough time to go through all of the goals today, so I will simply provide a quick overview and then elaborate on a few of the goals I believe are most critical to our success in order to begin the campus conversations and our individual deliberations.

## **The Macro View**

We propose a total of nine major goals. The first three goals relate to our core missions of teaching and scholarship.

### *I. Make the Miami Undergraduate Experience the Best in the Country*

The defining hallmark of a Miami education is an intense focus on both the intellectual and personal development of our undergraduates, achieved in large part by an emphasis on the partnership between academic life and student affairs.

### *II. Ensure Excellence in Graduate Education*

Miami seeks to be outstanding in the graduate programs it chooses to offer. Selective excellence provides for focused accomplishments that best benefit graduate students and contributes most effectively to our teaching and research missions.

### *III. Raise the Level of Scholarly Accomplishments*

The teacher/scholar model is at the heart of Miami's model for faculty. Professors who are at the intellectual frontiers of their respective disciplines make important contributions to knowledge, and they provide exceptional learning and discovery opportunities that define the Miami Engaged Undergraduate Experience.

The next two goals speak most directly to our role as a public university.

*IV. Increase the Impact of the Regional Campuses on the University and Their Communities*

Miami University Hamilton and Miami University Middletown are core components of the University that must innovate to further increase their contributions to the University and the communities they serve. They should be the foremost educational institutions in their communities, driving their economic, civic, and cultural resurgence.

*V. Improve the Future of Ohio*

At the core of Miami's mission as a public university is the promotion of educational and economic opportunities for our region and the state. We will contribute significantly to Ohio's transformation to a stronger, knowledge-based economy.

Finally, we propose four goals that simultaneously outline how we will achieve the other goals and further strengthen our identity and success.

*VI. Elevate the National Profile of Miami University*

Miami University will raise its national reputation by communicating its mission and success to prospective students, the general public, alumni, employers, and state and federal leaders.

*VII. Strengthen our Identity as the Employer of Choice for Faculty and Staff*

Miami University faculty and staff are the heart and soul of the university. We advance as an institution by ensuring that our employees are given the opportunity to grow professionally and personally as they serve the university community.

*VIII. Maximize the University's Resource Base*

Sufficient resources—including financial, staffing, and service delivery and information processes—are necessary for Miami to effectively provide quality instruction, research, and service outcomes. The University must become proactive and more sophisticated in planning the prudent use of resources to maximize effectiveness.

*IX. Create a Culture of Giving that Ensures Success for Miami's Next Century*

The future success of Miami rests strongly on private giving. We will cultivate a culture of giving that will significantly increase the number of donors, especially alumni, who will assist in funding important university priorities.

### **Making the Miami Undergraduate Experience the Best in the Country**

Each of these nine major goals has several specific sub-goals that define what it will take to achieve success. There is not time to go into these in detail, so I would like to focus on the first goal, in order to demonstrate how explicit recognition of strategic goals and outcomes will invigorate our efforts to achieve the extraordinary.

Our goal to “Make the Miami Undergraduate Experience the Best in the Country” is a clear statement about our serious intention to set the standard for the engaged undergraduate experience. It is an ambitious goal, but it is a goal that is both central to the future of higher education and a goal that Miami is exceptionally well-positioned to achieve.

#### *The Miami Graduate*

At the heart of this goal is our commitment to the development of both intellect and character. By doing so, we provide our students with a foundation, and momentum, that will carry them through the rest of their lives. I am not only referring to those measures of success that already mark Miami, like our graduation rate and the placement of our students in the top graduate and professional schools, but also, and just as importantly, I am also referring to those core qualities that define the Miami graduate as a person, an entrepreneurial worker, and a citizen. As we think about our programmatic goals, I find it useful to reflect on those qualities as outcomes that these goals should lead us to.

I have spoken with many employers and alums, and there is remarkable consistency in what they see as the special qualities of a Miami graduate—qualities that are not only descriptive, but also aspirational. At our best, we produce graduates who are:

- *Well-educated*—A liberal arts education is the foundation for whatever specialty our students choose. Our graduates have the ability to think critically and creatively and to communicate effectively. They have a broad knowledge of the natural and social worlds and an appreciation of the aesthetic world. They have a deep and structuring knowledge of their specific fields of study. They are prepared to participate actively in our civic community.

Our students have:

- *A great work ethic*—They appreciate that immersing themselves in their work is part of their identity and a source of great personal satisfaction. People depend on our graduates to set an example in their work and in their lives, through their habits and their attitudes.

- *Strong values*—They understand and exercise the highest standards of personal and professional integrity. They are conscious of their own moral values and act on them. They have an unbending commitment to themselves, their friends and family, and the world around them.
- *Initiative*—When asked to go from A to B, our graduates usually don't need a road map or explicit instructions. In fact, they are often the first to imagine B! They know how to seize opportunities and are not afraid of failure as they pursue their dreams. They are entrepreneurial at heart.

Let me give an example of student action that reflects these goals. This summer, I was contacted by a rising senior, Kate Waller. Kate is majoring in environmental studies and is concerned that the campus is not doing enough to reduce our carbon footprint and encouraging environmentally sustainable choices. Kate has organized a group of fellow students to resurrect a dormant environmental organization and to seek an approach to making our first year students more aware of the environmental impact of the choices they make and to provide them with alternatives. This summer she convinced Phillips to donate 3500 CFL bulbs, arguing that if each of these bulbs replaced an incandescent bulb, the savings to the campus would be \$48,000 through reductions in demand for energy. She is working with companies to provide refillable water bottles and coffee cups and finally, she convinced Kroger to donate cloth bags for grocery shopping. In other words, in just a few short weeks she organized students, conveyed key messages to those who could help, and took action, all of which is a testament to her education, her work ethic, her values, and her initiative.

#### *Academic Goals for an Engaged University*

So what, then, do we need to do in order to produce students with the profile I have just described? Let's turn briefly to the specific goals identified as part of "Making the Miami Undergraduate Experience the Best in the Country." The first set of goals relates to academic success, beginning with

- Infuse the University with learning and discovery paradigms that focus on inquiry-driven, active forms of education.
- Complete the Top 25 Initiative and the transformation of introductory courses.

The possibilities for learning and discovery for a university student have changed dramatically in the last decade, along with the amazingly rapid improvement in the ability of the Internet to support original research by making enormous amounts of raw material available to most students. We can now seize the opportunity to instill in our students, and develop in our curriculum, an approach that rests on what I earlier this year described as the "student-as-scholar" model of education. This approach obliterates the boundaries between our teaching and scholarship missions by viewing students as active agents of the unfolding research agenda, and, in turn, by adopting the mindset of research as the motivating impulse of higher education.

We all know that a special research experience with a faculty member is the ultimate form of embracing the discovery paradigm and the student-as-scholar model, but how much better will our academic progress be if we can better create the right “habits of the mind” at the beginning of the Miami Experience? The Top 25 Initiative seeks to transform our approach to education at its foundations, when our students first encounter Miami. So far, the results have exceeded my high expectations. At a recent workshop preparing faculty and staff Miami Access mentors, I ran into Professor Leonard Mark from Psychology who immediately began to tell me of his Top 25 Initiative experience with Psychology 111. “I have done this course nearly 30 times,” he said, “but this is truly the first time I will have taught it.” In a subsequent, and eloquent, e-mail, he elaborated on why he was so excited.

“As faculty, we can tell students there is certain basic stuff that they have to learn before they come to the frontiers of our knowledge. The difficulty with that approach is that students rarely reach the limits of our understanding because their encounters with textbooks and faculty lead them to believe that they are the repositories of the truth, which is to be memorized for the exam. And the sad reality is that much of the content is forgotten in short order.

I am excited about the Top 25 Project because it recognizes the possibilities for student and faculty learning that we have in front of us at a university setting. The focus is no longer on the content of the discipline, but on how members of the discipline think, how they use evidence to reach their conclusions. I envision our course redesign in psychology as changing the way students think—we want them to learn to use evidence to support their beliefs, to justify their explanations based on good evidence. In doing so we hope these changes will transfer not only to advanced courses in psychology, but more importantly, to courses in other departments. If we are successful, students will be able to take control over their own learning. They will be able to use the power of the Internet to satisfy their curiosity and, in doing so, demand *good* evidence to justify their beliefs as well as open up new vistas of information that they can incorporate into their existing knowledge structures.

In light of the problems facing the world today that this generation of students will have to address, will anything less suffice?”

Additional goals speak further to how we teach, whom we teach, and our commitment to student success. These include:

- Advance a culture that embraces difference and increase the proportion of minority students at least equal to the state of Ohio.
- Increase study abroad participation from 30 percent to 50 percent of the Oxford campus students.
- Increase the proportion of students involved with direct, meaningful research experiences with faculty and staff.

- Increase the six-year overall graduation rate from 80 percent to 85 percent, and narrow the gap for minority graduation rates compared to the overall rate.

### *Student Life Goals for an Engaged University*

These academic goals are complemented by a series of goals relating to student life, goals that reflect personal growth, and a campus climate that promotes learning and achievement.

- Become a national model for the development of the whole person with an emphasis on integrity, responsibility, engagement, and ethical behavior.

I am very excited here to highlight Miami's selection as one of 18 colleges and universities selected to participate in an AAC&U Project on Educating Students for Personal Responsibility and Integrity. Our contribution will focus on ethics and academic integrity, adding to the work of other universities seeking successful strategies to develop strength of character in our students. As our proposal notes, "Our aspiration is for each Miami student to be able to demonstrate and act based on Miami's goals for liberal learning: *reflection, informed action, thoughtful decisions, personal moral commitment, ethical understanding, and civic participation.*"

Recognizing the inherent advantages that the Oxford campus provides for students to maximize the opportunities of their Miami Experience, we will

- Successfully implement sophomore residency, thereby increasing student intellectual and personal development, increasing student engagement in the intellectual and co-curricular life of the university, and increasing sophomore year retention rates.

With about one-third of all students participating in the Greek community, the success of the Greek community both derives from and contributes to student success on campus. At its best, the Greek system provides exceptional opportunities for personal growth and the development of a meaningful community. As the original home of four fraternities and one sorority, we expect the best and set a goal to:

- Develop a model Greek community that achieves national recognition for its commitment to intellectual achievement, leadership, personal growth, and service to the broader community.

### *Building Campus Culture*

In addition to these specific academic and student life goals, there are three additional goals that cross over these two areas and contribute directly to student engagement and success. Critical to our students' success is their ability to live and work in a diverse environment. Even more fundamentally, we seek to use diversity and difference to improve what and how our students learn. To do this we will:

- Provide multiple opportunities for students to embrace difference and learn skills for living/working in a multicultural world, across curricular, co-curricular, local and global contexts.

The most recent National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) once again notes the exceptional level of participation of students in co-curricular activities, from clubs to service to intramural sports. As in most universities, one of the most intense forms of co-curricular activity is the student-athlete competing in intercollegiate sports. The challenge to compete at the highest levels is demanding everywhere, but it poses additional challenges at a school like Miami with its high academic standards. And the academic success of our student-athletes is impressive. This past year the cumulative GPA for ICA was over 3.0 and the graduation rate was 79 percent: only 2 percent behind the university cohort which, as noted above, is the ninth highest public university graduation rate in the nation! We provide the ultimate opportunity for the student-athlete, the opportunity to compete at the highest levels both athletically and academically. This spirit of competition, the drive to succeed at the highest level, adds to our sense of student engagement throughout the university and supports our drive to be the best. Thus our goal is to:

- Become a national model for intercollegiate athletics by maximizing student development with the successful implementation of the Culture of Champions strategic plan.

Finally, recognizing that the new generation of students connect, communicate, and learn in a dense maze of technology, we seek to provide an exceptionally effective technological environment. We want our students to be wired not only to each other, but globally. We want them to be able to pursue their academic interests any time and anywhere. We want them to be able to organize and to act together, even if geographically dispersed. We want technology to enable the highest levels of intellectual and personal engagement. Thus we seek to:

- Become a national model for the use of information technology in supporting the intellectual and co-curricular life of the university.

### **The Path Forward**

Miami is about to celebrate its 200<sup>th</sup> year, an enviable and proud moment in our history. It is a great moment to look back to see where we have been; it is an even greater moment to look forward to where we want to go. While we may be concluding our first two centuries, even more importantly, we are launching our third century. I do not know if the founders of Miami could ever have imagined such a place as Miami is today. But because of their efforts, and the many generations of faculty, staff, and students who have come before us, we can now imagine an even more impressive future. The strategic goals I have outlined are the waymarkers for the road ahead. They are critical steps in achieving success. Ultimately, though, success requires more than strategic goals. If we

want to be among the very best in higher education, we need to understand what it takes to go to the top.

In my view such success starts with a relentless commitment to excellence. Excellence is not a part-time attitude. It requires everyone to press to excel at the highest levels every day, in every way. Whether we think of it in terms of manufacturing's six sigma approach, or continuous improvement, or simply an irrepressible fire in the belly, we need to have the vision, and the passion, to become the very best at everything that we do.

We must also combine all of our activities, and all of our divisions, into a common vision for the future. We need to recognize that the seemingly separate parts of our university are actually intimately linked. Whether we are talking about the fusion of teaching, scholarship, and service into a spectacular learning environment, or the combining of the curricular and co-curricular, or intellect and character, in the development of the whole person, we should see connections everywhere. We need to be an engaged university that obliterates boundaries between our activities and pushes beyond the boundaries of what we have already achieved.

Above all, we need to understand why we are here, to understand what motivates this quest for excellence. It is human nature to compete, but our mission as a public university goes much deeper than that.

Last spring, Valerie and I were honored to be invited to speak at a half-day workshop organized by classified staff in Student Affairs. Specifically, we were asked to offer insights into how to "have it all" in an era when there is so much expected of us in both our personal and professional lives. One of the key points I discussed is the value of knowing how our work matters. To make the point I related an apocryphal story of an encounter at a Boeing facility between a group of visiting dignitaries and a custodian. One of the visitors stopped to ask the custodian what his job was, and the custodian replied, "I build airplanes." What an extraordinary sense of purpose he had!

So I turned to the group and asked, "What do we build?" I asked this question rhetorically, expecting only to provoke thinking among the group, and was startled to hear almost immediately the reply, "We build students." What a great response. But a moment later came a second response, even more global in its reach. "We build the future," offered another. In my view, she had it exactly right.

For the past two hundred years, consciously and unconsciously, Miami University has been building the future. As we stand on the brink of our third century, more than ever we should understand the power of that purpose. Through our students, through our scholarship, through our creativity, and through our service, we build the future. With uncommon vision, and with a relentless commitment to the highest standards of excellence, we, each and every one of us who are Miami, the Engaged University, proudly embrace that challenge. We will make the world a better place.