

Let me begin by thanking you all for being here this weekend and by admitting that I'm feeling more than a little self-conscious. Given my particular set of circumstances—specifically, my very long history with Gettysburg College—I wasn't so sure that an inauguration was necessary. But I was quickly corrected on that perception by a variety of people. And so I agreed that we should proceed, as long as this event could be a celebration of Gettysburg College—of its rich history, of its current strength, and of its very bright future.

I'm so pleased to welcome so many of you to the events of this weekend. I'm grateful for the presence of delegates from so many colleges and universities and other academic organizations; I'm honored by your willingness to travel here and participate in this ceremony. I also want to thank those in the platform party who represent a variety of constituencies and relationships to Gettysburg College; I have been moved by your comments. And I extend an especially warm welcome to two former presidents of Gettysburg College, Charles Glassick and Gordon Haaland.

I want to take a moment to recognize several groups who are here, most of whom I identify with quite closely.

First, the Board of Trustees, a group of which I am now a member, the group that elected me to this position, and a group that has been tremendously supportive of Gettysburg College.

Alumni, another group of which I'm a member. And I'm so pleased that several of my classmates from the class of 1977 made the trip. By the way, you might consider keeping some of those things you remember about me to yourself!

Faculty and staff—I'm a member of both of those groups now, though I must say my heart is so firmly with the faculty.

Students, a group of which I was once a member, and the group that inspires me to want to do my very best every day I'm on this job.

Other friends of the College and personal friends of mine—I am touched that so many of you are here.

And finally my family. I have several family members here, but I'd like to ask Ed, Brian, Rachel, and Tommy to stand up just for a moment. These four people are the most important people in my life and they each have given me their support and love and patience. There are just no words that can capture that, but I am certain that I would not be standing here today without their support and encouragement.

I have said many times over the last few months that I feel like I'm living someone else's life. I certainly never imagined myself as the president of Gettysburg College. But perhaps its unexpected nature is what has made this journey so humbling and so interesting and such an honor for me. I'm not going to spend much of my brief time today rehashing that journey with you; but there are two individuals who had tremendous influence on its course, and so I feel compelled to mention them because they are individuals whom many of you know. When I arrived at Gettysburg College as a student, serendipity (in the form of Registrar Ron Couchman) placed me into Professor Thane Pittman's introductory psychology class, and it was there that I found my intellectual passion. Thane was a tremendous mentor to me throughout my student days, and he eventually became my faculty colleague and department chair. Though he has moved on to another institution, he has continued to be a great mentor, supporter, and friend. For all of that I am so grateful.

The other person I must mention is the one who first thrust me into an administrative role here at Gettysburg, and that is Gordon Haaland, Gettysburg's 12th president. I learned a tremendous amount working as Gordon's assistant and as interim provost with him. Those opportunities in the 1990s set a course for me that wasn't apparent at the time, but has certainly played out in recent years. Thank you, Gordon.

The seeds for my comments today were planted on the beach this summer while I was on vacation. I got to celebrate my birthday at the beach, which is as good as it gets from my perspective. And early on the morning of my birthday, I went down to sit by the ocean by myself. In that peaceful and relaxed moment where did my mind go? It wandered to...Gettysburg College (I am more than a bit obsessed with this place), and all of a sudden I felt the need to jot some thoughts down about liberal arts education, about Gettysburg College more specifically, and about what makes Gettysburg College such a distinctive experience for undergraduates.

My daughter Rachel found me on the beach madly scratching notes all over a magazine cover, and warned me that I'd better put it away before Ed showed up because he wouldn't be too happy to find me on the beach preoccupied with work. They were both right, so I put those scribbles away until my vacation was over. But not before I had jotted down some things I wanted to say to you today.

The first is my strong conviction that the liberal arts experience is an educational approach that has never been more important or more relevant. Given our complex world, the difficult challenges we face in our communities, in our country, and as global citizens, we have an obligation to make good on our mission, which is to prepare students to be effective participants and leaders in a changing world.

To carry out that mission, those of us who offer a liberal arts education provide both broadly-based and in-depth learning experiences that teach and encourage critical and integrative thinking, the adoption of multiple approaches and methodologies, effective oral and written communication, and an appreciation and understanding of diverse cultural perspectives.

I believe we need citizens who are prepared in this way; in fact, we will *depend* on future citizens who are prepared in this way. In a world that is changing so quickly, where problems require multiple perspectives for their solution, where we need people to look beyond themselves and feel a responsibility to others, it's hard to imagine better preparation.

I find it telling that so many universities both here and across the world that have not historically embraced a liberal arts tradition are using us as a model. They are trying to figure out how they, too, can provide this kind of educational experience. On the other hand, surprisingly, or perhaps not so surprisingly, in this challenging economic context, there have been many who have been quick to question the value of the liberal arts. I can't tell you how many articles I've read and how many people I've heard say the liberal arts approach may no longer be relevant or as valuable as it once was.

I feel so vehemently opposed to this position that I felt compelled to host a panel this morning on the enduring value of the liberal arts with a group of distinguished Gettysburg alumni. In my view, the value of a liberal arts education has never been more clear. That's not to dismiss other forms of education, which are also important; but this is a time to be talking about making the liberal arts experience available to *more* people, not fewer.

Perhaps with these comments, I'm not saying anything new. I'm simply reinforcing the values and views that were discussed on July 4, 1832, the day chosen for the formal organization of Gettysburg College, then known as Pennsylvania College.

The speaker was Calvin Blythe, former Pennsylvania secretary and attorney general and president judge of the 12th judicial district of Pennsylvania. His emotions on that day ran high, as mine do today. He expressed affection for the

College, a deep and personal commitment to its success, and a sense that this model of education is a tremendous investment. Specifically he said:

“I rejoice at the establishment, among you, of the College this day organized. This place is so intimately connected with my early and most agreeable recollections, that I feel more than a common interest, I may say an anxiety, for the success of every effort to enhance its prosperity.” (p. 16).

Calvin and I are definitely on the same page with regard to our feelings about Gettysburg College. He went on to say:

“[This college] cannot fail to be essentially and extensively useful. The people here are prepared to appreciate and improve the advantages it offers. The cultivation of the arts and sciences will diffuse around a cheerful light. They are, at the same time, essential to our minutest comfort, and to our national existence.... But it is in the development of the faculties and energies of the human mind, that we must look for the still richer fruits of a systematic education...” (p. 16).

Well said Mr. Blythe! He also took the opportunity to express why this kind of education is so critical to our society’s ability to function well. These words ring just as true now as they did then, perhaps even more so. He said,

“The age in which we live, the form of our institutions, the political position we occupy and our best interests, all require, that the great mass of the people should be elevated by a higher grade of intelligence. ...We want a taste for acquiring information generally diffused among our people—a zeal in the pursuit of it, that will not be deterred by slight obstacles....the success of our free institutions, which all so much value, the security of our rights and liberties, depend upon the general intelligence of the people...” (p. 11).

Finally, even in 1832 there were questions raised about the value of a liberal arts education, and about access to it. Judge Blythe said:

“That there is in our country indifference, which seems even to approach to a dislike or distrust of what is called a liberal education, among the great mass of our people, is a painful truth...These sentiments...are fraught with the most pernicious consequences. There is no profession, rank, order, or condition of men...to whom a liberal knowledge is not suitable.” (pp. 12-13).

I couldn’t agree with Calvin Blythe more with one exception, which I’m sure you’ve all guessed, and that is that I would also include women in the group of those for whom this type of education is suitable.

But now let me return to today.

Do we have some challenges that we, as a liberal arts college, must meet?

Absolutely. We need to demonstrate our value more clearly, that we are making good on our mission, that our graduates are going on to be effective members of their professions, their communities, and of the world, and that their preparation is second to none. While the values and goals of a liberal arts education have had a long history, our curricula and pedagogical techniques have certainly shifted to meet today's issues and the needs of today's students. Programs that our founders could not have imagined such as Globalization Studies, Neuroscience, Film Studies; the use of technology inside and outside of the classroom; the integration of service-learning into courses; the opportunities for internships, externships, job shadowing and networking—all are developments that reflect changes in what we teach, and the way we teach and learn and prepare our students.

We provide preparation for careers not so much through specific course content, but through developing critical thinking skills, the ability to analyze and synthesize information, the ability to communicate effectively. These are skills that CEOs look for when hiring employees, and these are skills that are transferable. They go beyond a specific area of specialization and serve graduates well over a range of careers, which is so important in an age where people change careers multiple times over the course of their lives, where the job market is shifting, and where new job opportunities regularly emerge.

A second challenge is that we must do a better job of working collaboratively across institutions. We've been led by college and university rankings of all kinds to compete with one another. Of course competition is certainly not all bad if it motivates us to improve. However, I believe that there are opportunities for collaboration across institutions that have the potential to strengthen our system of higher education. In fact, one of the up sides of this down economy is that we are talking more about common issues and concerns and beginning to think about new ways of working together. That can only make us all stronger.

Finally, our biggest challenge may be affordability. Our model is not focused on getting as many students through an assembly line as we can in the shortest time possible. Much of what we do rests on one-on-one relationships built between faculty and students, on mentoring, on providing opportunities for discovery, discussion, and debate. Ours is a resource-intensive endeavor. That said, I believe we need to consider ways of expanding access to this kind of education, which means assuring its affordability to more people, not fewer.

Frankly, I am confident that we'll meet these challenges. We must, because a liberal arts education is the most modern educational model we have, and tomorrow's society will be enhanced by individuals who have had a liberal arts experience. Gettysburg College will continue to offer the very finest liberal arts education, the very best academic experience that we can offer; and we will look for ways to continue to improve that experience and make it accessible to students from a wide variety of backgrounds.

But what about Gettysburg College's specific niche in higher education? When asked this question, I always rush to say that being a residential liberal arts college already distinguishes us. There are not many of us---less than 300 in the country---and we account for only about 3% of all of those who obtain a college degree. But what distinguishes us from those other liberal arts colleges, even from those other national liberal arts colleges? This is the question that many colleges ask themselves, even obsess over, in this era of branding and marketing. Of course, Gettysburg has some truly extraordinary academic programs. The Sunderman Conservatory of Music, a relatively new program for Gettysburg that builds on our strong history of excellence in music, now also provides the opportunity for students to major in performance. Of course, we heard from some of our Conservatory students in a wonderful program of music last night and in this ceremony today. A Conservatory integrated so firmly into a liberal arts program is certainly a point of distinction for Gettysburg.

We also have a truly unique Civil War Era Studies program—an interdisciplinary academic program in which students study the Civil War and American culture at the time of the Civil War. And what better place to undertake this work than here in Gettysburg?

And of course, another of Gettysburg's distinctive programs is the Eisenhower Institute, which advances in-depth discussion of important public policy issues and provides students rich opportunities to interact with public policy scholars and makers both here on campus and in Washington D.C. However, while these and other programs are distinctive, there is something deeper that distinguishes Gettysburg College, that makes Gettysburg Gettysburg.

From a historical perspective, there are two major contexts that have had tremendous impact on our evolution. First, our Lutheran heritage has set a firm

framework for our current focus on service to others and on social justice. While there is no mention of the Lutheran Church in the College's charter, there was certainly a strong sense of association with the Lutheran Church from the beginning. Our founder, Samuel Simon Schmucker, was one of the most prominent Lutheran theologians of the time. He was dedicated to education, having also founded the Lutheran Theological Seminary here in Gettysburg; he was opposed to slavery; and he was an advocate for education for women.

Service to others is a value here at Gettysburg College that has grown from our affiliation with the Lutheran Church. Our Center for Public Service, founded by Karl Mattson, its first director and I think not coincidentally a Lutheran Chaplain at Gettysburg, has provided a model that many other institutions have sought to emulate. The approach is one that connects public service to the curriculum, whose core concept is to "Think Critically and Act Compassionately." Our students not only offer their help to those in need, but they are encouraged to look critically at the social justice issues in their local and global communities and to consider how best to resolve them. Our students have found that the integration of their academic experience with service has tremendous power. I am pleased to say that many, many Gettysburgians have engaged in public service as part of this inaugural weekend. Some did so here in the local community, while alumni clubs in Pittsburgh, Boston, and New York also provided service to their neighborhoods. I thank those of you who participated for taking a few hours to make a difference here in Adams County and in other communities as well.

A second context that has had a major influence on Gettysburg College is a location that ties us so integrally to important moments in our nation's history: The Battle of Gettysburg, commonly acknowledged as the turning point of the Civil War, and the Gettysburg Address, delivered so humbly by President Abraham Lincoln, who would not have imagined that his words would become so central to our nation's history and identity.

What you might not know is that one of our own alumni, David Wills, from the class of 1851, had much to do with that moment in our history. Following the Battle, the Governor of Pennsylvania asked David Wills if he would work to establish a national cemetery. David bought the land, hired the architect, worked to design the dedication ceremony. He also issued a formal invitation to President Lincoln to deliver "a few appropriate remarks" at the cemetery's dedication, and he offered his own home as lodging for the President. And Lincoln came. The College closed on that day, and the faculty and staff and students joined the townsfolk to walk together to the dedication of the cemetery. Lincoln's humility on that day was moving, as his words indicated so clearly the value he placed on

action over rhetoric: “The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.”

As many of you know, we recreate that moment with our first-year students during their first days on campus. We walk together through the center of town to the cemetery, several hundred of us, to hear the words of the Gettysburg Address and to reflect on their meaning, to consider the new birth of freedom for which Lincoln longed.

These two historical contexts—our Lutheran heritage and our connection to this turning point in America’s history—have set a tone so inextricably woven into the fabric here that we sometimes take them for granted. But these two legacies have given us a sense of seriousness of purpose combined with a humility—a sense that we have important things to do, an understanding that our actions informed by a strong academic experience, our commitment to serving others, will speak for us.

Coming at this from a slightly different and more contemporary perspective, if you’re looking for adjectives to describe Gettysburg’s culture, I can tell you that *mellow* doesn’t come to mind. *Relaxed* doesn’t either, though *fun-loving* might. *Authentic* would as well. But first on that list of adjectives would have to be the word *active*. Not *busy*, but *active*. Active with a purpose. You can feel it when you talk with our students, some of whom have schedules that are extraordinarily complex because they are not only taking classes and working in laboratories and helping faculty with research, but they are also participating in community service and athletics and writing for the *Gettysburgian* and figuring out whether they can manage to spend a full year abroad instead of just one semester. This place simmers constantly.

Gettysburg is a place where things don’t just happen—rather, they get done. And this makes me proud. Because not only are we offering our students a superb academic experience, a rich opportunity for intellectual development across more than 40 majors and a strong liberal arts curriculum, but we are also cultivating in our students a sense of responsibility about putting that education to good use. Our expectation is that Gettysburgians will go on to make strong contributions in their professions and in their communities, with an eye always on the greater good, on making the world a better place. And so we encourage them to develop initiative, to run with this propensity to be active. We give them lots of practice. All students complete senior capstone projects, many of them do independent research, some design and lead service-learning opportunities, some lead outdoor adventure experiences, some start new organizations. The result is a developing sense in our students of self-efficacy: that it’s possible to get things done, that it’s possible to

make a difference. Through this very active approach we develop in our students a sense of responsibility as members of a community, a sense that not only can they make a significant contribution, but it's their responsibility to do so. And that is what distinguishes Gettysburg.

Let me give you just one example. Aimee George graduated from Gettysburg just last spring. She majored in both Political Science and Globalization Studies, and minored in Philosophy and Peace and Justice Studies. In the fall of her junior year, she studied abroad at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa. As part of this experience, she chose to volunteer in an afterschool program at a local daycare center that cares for some of the poorest children in that community, ensuring that they are fed, clothed, and nurtured. Through this experience she built a strong relationship with people in the community and with the children, in particular. That connection stayed with her after she returned to Gettysburg. In April she discovered a way to augment that connection. She and another student, Anna Springer, also a senior, found an organization called One Laptop per Child and applied for a grant. The result was that they were selected as one of 29 teams from around the world to provide laptops to children living in Africa. Wanting to be sure that the project they began was going to be sustainable, they established G-TEC---Grahamstown/Gettysburg: Together Empowering Children. This program has provided laptop computers to 103 children in Grahamstown, many of whom are in the afterschool program in which Aimee worked. Aimee and Anna discovered that two Gettysburg alumni, Andrew Stinson from the class of 2007 and Stephanie Bonnes from the class of 2008, were studying at Rhodes, so they recruited them to the project as well. In addition, we now have student volunteers and professors from Gettysburg and Rhodes working to provide support and expertise to this project.

Now you might wonder, why laptops? Is that really what these children need? According to Aimee, who returned to Grahamstown this summer to oversee the establishment of this program, these laptops give these children access to a tool that opens a new world of opportunity and expands their creativity. This is not a laptop program; this is an education program. This is about helping these children to lift themselves out of this cycle of poverty, helping open their eyes to a world that they would likely not have been able to imagine. There is no telling what the impact of this program might finally be on the lives of these children. And a wonderful "side effect" is that it has also brought together two communities: Grahamstown and Gettysburg. When I asked Aimee to reflect on this a bit, she said along with her official majors, Gettysburg helped her to major in social justice and in serving her community.

This is just one of many examples of students building on their academic experience, one that at Gettysburg is oriented specifically towards developing effective communication, multi- and interdisciplinary thinking, and local and global citizenship. This is an example of a student whose experience reinforced in her a belief that her actions could make a difference, an experience that encouraged her and taught her how to take initiative, an experience that built upon her already strong desire to make the world a better place.

I would be remiss if I did not mention another key ingredient of the Gettysburg experience. Also imbedded in the lives of our students, both inside and outside the classroom, is a focus on integrity, a value that is also closely linked to those Lutheran roots and that historical moment. I am proud to say that we still have an Honor Code at Gettysburg College, though many colleges have given up on honor codes. This creates an academic environment that implies our confidence that students will act with integrity when it comes to their academic work. And we expect that value to be carried out in their lives outside of the classroom as well, in the way they conduct themselves as community members. In fact, we begin with this focus during Convocation on our students' first day at Gettysburg with the Gettysburg Pledge. Students join together to say:

I affirm that I will uphold the highest principles of honesty and integrity in all my endeavors at Gettysburg College and foster an atmosphere of mutual respect within and beyond the classroom.

Honesty, integrity, respect—strong values, lofty ideals—and exactly what we should and do expect of our students.

There has been some debate recently about whether or not colleges and universities should be in the business of teaching values. In his book *Save the World on Your Own Time*, Stanley Fish has argued that faculty should teach substance, not values, that the role of a faculty member is to advance her or his discipline, period. But we are very open here at Gettysburg about our values, particularly with regard to the importance of integrity and respect for others. This is an essential part of the student experience, and these are values that I expect us all to model as members of a learning community.

The Gettysburg experience ultimately cultivates strong habits of mind and habits of heart. For what is the value of a great education if it isn't put to good use? And who among us will not have the opportunity to take action that will benefit others? No matter what our profession—physician, scientist, philosopher, teacher, attorney, computer programmer, business person—we are all members of a community for which we have responsibility.

As I've reflected on my role, I've come to realize that my job as president is to foster a community in which Gettysburgians can be their very best: a context that prepares students in the best way possible to be active participants and leaders in this quickly changing world; an education that readies our students and alumni to face issues and problems of local, national, and global significance, that develops in our students the intellectual skills necessary for their solution; an experience that promotes in our students a belief that those issues must and can be addressed, that these problems can be solved; and a culture that encourages a sense of responsibility for taking a role in their solution. Gettysburg develops intellect, encourages initiative, values integrity. The result is a community of Gettysburgians who will have positive impact locally and globally, in their communities and across the world. Intellect, initiative, integrity, impact. This is leadership. This is Gettysburg College.

One of our students, Angela Dolson, who coordinated this year's orientation for first-year students, selected a quote by Margaret Mead to go on the back of first-year orientation t-shirts. It's a quote that some of you have no doubt heard before, it's one that resonates with me personally, and it's why I do the work I do. Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Intellect, initiative, integrity, impact. I believe that Gettysburgians can and will change the world.

Finally, let me conclude with a personal comment. I began my remarks on the beach, and let me return now to the beach. When I'm on vacation I like to do some reading by the ocean that is purely for fun. And one of the books I read this year was called the *Crowning Glory of Calla Lily* Ponder. It's a book written by Rebecca Wells—and a positively delightful read. Dancing was an important and symbolic part of this book, and the main character's mother talked about dancing from the bottom of your heart. This phrase has stayed with me. Because for me, the opportunity to lead Gettysburg College truly is the opportunity to dance from the bottom of my heart. And I invite all of you who are Gettysburgians to dance with me.

Thank you.

Reference

Blythe, C. *Oration Delivered at the Organization of Pennsylvania College at Gettysburg*. Gettysburg: H.C. Neinstedt, 1832.