

COPY OF THE PREPARED COMMENTS
OF THOMAS H. KEAN
TENTH PRESIDENT OF DREW UNIVERSITY
ON THE OCCASION
OF HIS INAUGURATION
APRIL 20, 1990
GRAND TENT
DREW UNIVERSITY LACROSSE FIELD
MADISON, NEW JERSEY

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INAUGURAL RESPONSE OF THE HONORABLE THOMAS H. KEAN
PRESIDENT OF DREW UNIVERSITY
MADISON, NEW JERSEY
FRIDAY, APRIL 20, 1990

I am invested today with the symbols of office. In them I accept more than a lamp, a book, or a seal. As I took the oath of office, I accepted a rich legacy.

Nine presidents have preceded me to this wooded land, each so much a part of Drew's character. As I assume the responsibilities of the presidency, I am awed by these mighty oaks of Drew's past. I pray that I may honor their memory by leading Drew to its brightest days.

A century and twenty-three have seen Methodist Bishops, college presidents and Fulbright Scholars emerge from the Forest. Captains of industry and keepers of history. A Wall Street investor...an art history teacher for the blind...a Majority Whip in the United States Congress.

Few colleges of our size can boast such a legacy. Few places anywhere in the country carry the traditions, purposes, and promise of the American university better than Drew.

At our best, we blend the youth, enthusiasm and idealism of the undergraduate College, the intellectual depth of the Graduate School, and the Theological School's commitment to moral and ethical purposes. Ours is a mix quite unlike any university in this country.

President Robert Oxnam captured Drew a quarter century ago: "Strength is found," he said, "in the oneness of the entity, in crossing over disciplinary and school lines, in the imaginative consideration of learning all learning, not just one small branch separate and alone."

Drew's colleges do not exist separate and alone, nor does Drew seclude itself, separate from the world.

Eight years ago, my hand on a Bible, I took the oath of office as Governor of New Jersey. That day I said the state was a microcosm of America. Eight years later, I still believe that. And I contend that the university is a microcosm of America's future.

Its hopes and its worries are much like our country's. It faces trouble at home and abroad, on campus and beyond the gates. And if its illnesses are society's ills, then its cure can be the prescription for a nation.

Here at Drew we have an opportunity to show the way. We must strive to create a community where learning is not confined to the classroom.

Here dissent from the norm must not only be tolerated but embraced. Here sexism, racism or homophobia must be denounced, for their existence denies the very essence of the university.

We are a diverse group. Within this small university are people from more than 40 states and 25 countries. I want to see this diversity increase. Perhaps if we learn to live together on this campus, we will be prepared to live together in the world.

We should be the agora, the marketplace of ideas, where Oxnam's words ring true: "At Drew we have no fear of ideas...and instead save our anxiety for the lack of ideas."

We say we are selective, and we are. We say we admit only the best, and we do. And we charge an extraordinary amount of money for our services.

All this gives us a special obligation to ensure that when we are through, a young man or woman is ready to make his or her contribution to the world.

In the past few years the American university has been subject to increasing criticism. Too often our response has been to react with outrage -- to draw the wagons in a circle. We have defended the status quo with long and learned treatises. And yet we know we have problems. Why not admit them?

Only then can we follow the dictum of the Greek philosopher: "Know thyself."

If we are self-confident, if we are truly proud of what we do, we will open our campuses to public inspection. We should welcome evaluation and help shape the criteria.

We should be our own worst critics. If we are not, then others less well-informed certainly will be.

We must meet the challenges that confront us.

We are living in a nation whose ethnic and racial makeup is changing. Many of us will live to see minorities become the majority. And yet too many are being denied the very opportunities we have cherished.

We in higher education have an obligation. It is an historic obligation, important not only to our campus but to our country.

We must extend our reach further than we ever have before. These ivied gates must become the portal through which the children of immigrants and the great-grandchildren of slaves find that the American dream is still real.

We must attract more minority students. But recruiting isn't enough. Once they are here they must feel welcome not only in the classroom but in the dorm room. We should work as hard at keeping them here as we did at getting them here in the first place.

Even that will not be enough if we do not also provide more role models on the faculty and in the administration.

And a commitment to minority hiring means more than trying to land one of the country's top 10 minority professors. We have to nurture the young scholars on our own faculties as well.

Second, in a world that is moving so rapidly, the university must not stand still.

This globe is filled with extraordinary peoples determined to conquer us not in the old manner with weapons, but in the new with technology and an educated citizenry. We will find ourselves fighting for economic survival in a world our parents never knew.

Our survival will depend in part on our knowledge of language and cultures different from our own. We must feel at home in Hong Kong as well as Netcong, New Delhi as well as New Brunswick.

I am proud that Drew has a long history of thinking globally. Mead Hall itself is made from mahogany grown in Santo Domingo and wood pillars carved in London. By our sixth year, Drew graduates were ministering in China and Japan.

Our earliest days brought students from Bulgaria and India, and a Polyglot Society was formed just for those who spoke more than one language. (I wonder how many of us would be able to join that kind of club today.)

Drew has a right to be proud of its programs in Brussels, London, and at the United Nations. Let us expand those efforts. Drew students should be able to experience Asia, Africa and Latin America. The languages and cultures of other people should become an integral part of a Drew education.

And let us never forget that the essence of Drew continues to be found in the classroom. It is, in the end, the academic enterprise that remains the center of any great university.

We must remember that the student's first journey into the mind of Plato, the heart of Walt Whitman, or the soul of Martin Luther King is as mystical and glorious as the mighty voyages to the far-flung shores of academic research.

We continue in the Drew tradition to believe that a unity of knowledge is fundamental to the liberal arts. Here, the scientist must know something about history, the English major something about calculus.

And in the crush of research, faculty in our three great schools must never lose sight of their charge--to teach, to serve, and to study. Teaching, scholarship and service must remain a triple mandate for all faculty.

To assert the primacy of teaching is one thing; to recognize and reward it is another. It is more difficult, perhaps, for the larger research universities than for Drew, but no less an obligation.

Even the largest university should be "user-friendly." Professors and students, industries and states, should be able to tap its limitless possibilities. It should have a durable hardware of students and faculty, a flexible software of ideas, and a network of free expression between all the parts.

The philosophy of education is couched in the metaphors of the age, but the philosophy itself is timeless. Countless inaugural speeches like mine have been delivered throughout history. And though they come from different settings, they share a common theme: the very purposes of the university.

Those purposes have always nurtured both a sense of self and a concern for community; embraced training for work and learning for life; centered on values and the spirit as well as study and inquiry.

It is tempting to forget our history and think we can offer new and improved definitions of why we exist. Our focus instead must be on the obligations those purposes hold.

This is a time like no other. Never before have so many Americans sought higher learning. Never before has college been so essential to success in life. Never before has the nation's economic supremacy been so threatened. Never before has the survival of our democracy so depended not on a learned few, but an entire body of educated citizens.

The university is not a safe haven from the problems beyond the gates. It never has been. But now more than ever it must be the preparation for solving those problems. I believe it is. And as I take my place among the leaders of 3,000 colleges across the country, I must be willing not just to say it, but to prove it.

And as we set about this timeless task, let us remember words spoken 88 years ago, on the other edge of this century, by a new college president named Woodrow Wilson. "A new age is before us," Wilson said. "(An age) in which, it would seem, we must lead the world."

If colleges and universities accept the challenge to lead...I do not know where the path will end. I do know that for us, it begins here, at the University in the Forest.

And so first, to our trustees, I say: thank you for the great honor of leading the expedition.

To each and every member of the faculty and administration, I say: challenge the students, challenge yourselves, and challenge me.

To our loyal and proud alums, I say: you always have a home here, and a stake in our future. I want your help as we plant new seeds.

And finally, to the students, I say: talk with me, learn with me, grow with me. Hold true to the words of the poet: "The woods are made for the hunters of dreams."

God bless this university, and God bless you all.