

Remarks
Freshman Convocation
Aug. 20, 2006
Comstock Concert Hall
School of Music
2:30 p.m.

Good afternoon and again let me welcome you to the University of Louisville.

For the next four years or for some of you maybe longer, this will be your home. We are proud you have chosen the University of Louisville. We realize you had many choices as you graduated from high school and we are glad your choice is U of L.

As new members of our U of L family, you should have big expectations -- both of us, the university and yourself.

You should expect us at U of L to:

1. Give you every opportunity to be successful, not just in the classroom but in your total education experience,
2. Provide the support you need academically, personally and socially to grow as a person; and
3. To challenge you, to make you think, to reach further than you believe you can attain.

At the same time, you should:

1. Expect to apply yourself academically, in and out of the classroom;
2. Expect to experience all that the campus and the community have to offer academically, culturally and socially;
3. You should expect to look for learning opportunities on and off campus; and opportunities in this great city
4. And you should expect to challenge yourself; take chances; step outside of your comfort zone

We commit we will do our part. We know you will do your part. And together as a team we will be successful.

Your new home, the University of Louisville is more than 200 years old, one of the oldest universities in the nation. U of L has a great history and tradition, with many distinguished graduates.

But U of L today is much different than the university your parents and grandparents may have known, much different than just a few years ago.

For several years ago, the Kentucky Legislature passed legislation called the Postsecondary Education Improvement Act. This law mandated that the University of Louisville be a "preeminent metropolitan research university," a university among the nation's top institutions.

In response to that mandate, the University established the Challenge for Excellence, a 10-year strategic plan to ensure that U of L is indeed on the nation's preeminent universities.

This year we are eight years into the challenge and we are achieving the Challenge -- meeting the goals to ensure our place as a preeminent university.

The Challenge for Excellence set specific goals in several areas.

First, we set a goal of recruiting the best students.

In 1999, the average incoming ACT score of our freshmen was 21.5, slightly above the national average of 21.1 and state average of 20.6.

Today, you the class of 2010, are entering U of L with an average ACT of 24.2. You have the highest incoming grade point average in U of L history.

You are the best academically prepared freshman class in the history of U of L -- give yourself a hand.

Second, the Challenge for Excellence emphasized the quality of our faculty, the need to retain the outstanding faculty we have while recruiting new world-renowned faculty.

Through a program called Bucks for Brains, in which we raise money and the state will match it, we have created more than 120 endowed faculty positions at U of L. We are recruiting the nation's finest faculty to our campus to join our already great faculty in teaching, research and service.

You will have opportunities to learn from these outstanding faculty during your careers at U of L.

The faculty here are doing remarkable things.

For instance:

-- Our faculty helped develop and then implant the first fully implantable artificial heart.

-- Sena Naslund a professor in the College of Arts and Sciences is Kentucky's poet laureate.

-- Faculty at our James Graham Brown Cancer Center developed the world's first vaccine to prevent cervical cancer.

-- Another researcher has isolated and is replicating stem cells, a procedure that may have tremendous impact in many areas of medicine.

-- Speed School researchers are developing technologies that fit on the head of a pin.

-- And still another medical researcher has actually made paralyzed mice walk again.

These are the faculty you will encounter -- and should seek out -- during your studies at U of L.

Third, when I became president four years ago, I spoke of U of L becoming a "Citizen University," meaning a university that not only educates students, but also makes a real difference in our community. Today, we are doing just that.

For example, our faculty have developed 15 new companies from our research labs, new businesses and job in our community; to help it prosper and grow.

We also work with the Jefferson County Public Schools. U of L last year was the leading partner in the EveryOne Reads program. That program pairs our 350 volunteers with students who need

help learning to read. I hope you will consider joining this worthwhile and rewarding effort.

Soon we will be announcing a new, larger partnership in which we will adopt an entire part of this city and try to help it in areas ranging from education and economic development to healthcare. We call this our Signature Partnership Program; a program that will have a clearly defined role for you, our students, to incorporate service learning into your academic/classroom experience.

We are growing and changing as a university. We have the largest endowment of any public university in Kentucky. We are America's fastest

growing university in terms of federal NIH research funding.

So what now? First, it's time to celebrate our recruiting success. We will have a campus-wide celebration event on the Oval Sept. 15. You will hear more about this event in coming weeks, and I encourage each of you to attend this and other celebrations, such as the opening of Community Park on Aug. 28.

Second, it's also time to set a higher expectation and standards for the future.

The University campus has begun work on a new strategic plan for the next 10 years.

We'll be meeting with faculty, staff and you our students over the next few months to get your input, to help us set the direction as we continue to become one of the best universities in the country.

This new strategic plan is important to you.

First, our continued growth will give you more educational opportunities than ever.

Second, as the university grows in stature, it will enhance the value of your University of Louisville degree.

Finally, this plan will lead to many more programs, more research, more honors and many other reasons for you to feel pride in U of L.

We are a great university. Take advantage of all that we have to offer.

Again, welcome to the university. Welcome home.