

The seal of Carlow University is visible in the background. It features a circular border with the text "SEAL OF CARLOW UNIVERSITY PITTSBURGH PENNSYLVANIA" and the year "1929". In the center is a shield with a cross, a star, and the Latin motto "AD SUPERNA NON SUPERBA".

CARLOW UNIVERSITY

ACCENT ON PROGRESS

JANUARY 27, 2009

Dr. Mary Hines reflects upon Carlow University's mission and its recent accomplishments in her annual State of the University address.

Today we gather to assess the state of our University, which is neither 'status quo' nor static, but dynamic and evolutionary. Today we identify how the University looks today, in the light of its past and in anticipation of its future. We acknowledge bridges which have brought us from our past to our present, and we design new bridges to meet the opportunities and the challenges of our future. In considering the state of our University, we understand that our past, present, and future are deeply interrelated and internally consistent.

Our history and our future are grounded in multiple beliefs: belief in the potential of our students; belief in the power and mutual

compatibility of reason and faith; belief in respect for the human spirit as more than material reality driven by economic goals (a belief displayed on our University seal); belief in appreciation for diversity in all its revelations; and belief in the fundamentals of our mission and the shared values which we espouse in our daily work as we honor and bring honor to our University and guarantee that we will do it no harm through our words and actions.

Throughout our history, we have celebrated many successes: those of our students and alumnae/i in achieving their goals and in living their values; those of faculty and staff in educating their students,

in contributing knowledge to their fields, and in serving their professions; those of the college, now University, in meeting the educational needs of students by developing academic programs, delivering support services and providing financial aid. We also have celebrated the collective service we have provided to our communities.

WE EMBRACE OUR PAST!

As we enter into the 80th Anniversary of our founding by the Sisters of Mercy, we recall that 1929 is famous for at least one other significant event in addition to the founding of Mount Mercy College. At a time of economic uncertainty 80 years later, we reflect on the wisdom and faith of the women who gave birth to this Catholic, liberal arts institution dedicated to the education of women; who shaped its mission and values; and who persevered in their educational ministry throughout the Great Depression by the sacrifices of their community and of their students, and through the support of those who believed in their calling to educate the daughters of the working class.

While we honor our past,

WE ENGAGE OUR PRESENT:

As a learning community, we aspire to foster a culture of caring, reflected in our core values of the sacredness of creation, hospitality, and service and demonstrated in a commitment to value and respect self and others. As an academic institution, we continue to provide a curriculum focused on intellectual quest, discovery and reflection on learning, and on developing an expanded world view grounded in the Catholic intellectual tradition of pursuing the deep realities of truth and justice.

We foster intellectual integrity, leadership, and progress for our students and our community. Through these values, we bear witness to our identity as a Catholic, Mercy-sponsored institution dedicated to the education of women... and a few good men.

In the past few years, Carlow University has rejoiced in many significant achievements and milestones. Among these, we point to Carlow's unqualified 10-year institutional re-accreditation; the re-accreditation of the Campus School; 10-year re-accreditation of the nursing programs in the School of Nursing; final approval of university status after a three-year probationary period; authorization of two doctoral programs; the 30th anniversary of unique educational service to adult students; the 25th anniversary of the Early Childhood Education program in our School of Education; improved assessment of academic programs, services, and student progress; development of learning outcomes for students in co-curricular activities; increased faculty and student scholarship; development of new undergraduate and graduate programs; expanded partnerships with other institutions and with the community; increased opportunities for service-learning and service projects; numerous study abroad experiences for classes and individual students; significant awards to faculty, staff, students, programs and services; energized reconnections with alumnae/i and increased donor support for scholarships and special projects; extensive renovation of infrastructure and facilities, including the donor-supported writing center, nursing skills lab, communications lab, and a fitness center in lower St. Agnes Center of Carlow University.

In acknowledging these few sample signs of vigor, we recognize that all progress is, and will continue to be, the result of faculty, staff, and students working together to advance the mission of the University and the success of its students.

In employing best practices for operations and service, the University has made significant strategic moves to ensure its security, growth, and vitality: ongoing use of legal counsel on internal and external policy compliance and completeness; enhanced safety procedures; development and implementation of an integrated administrative data system and technology enhancements; adoption of an enrollment management model for recruitment,

retention, and persistence of students; surveys and recommendations for better service to adult learners; development of a program to honor distinguished alumnae/i; facilities master planning, including property acquisition options; dialogue on a common understanding of the scope of shared governance, including hearing the voice of faculty, staff, and students through the renewal of the Staff Assembly, the restructuring of the Student Government Association, and the presence of elected faculty, staff, and student representatives to University and Board committees. These and other significant changes and achievements have advanced Carlow to renewed viability, a sharper sense of purpose and a new level of competitive advantage in attracting students and donors and in engaging alumnae/i in proud support of their *alma mater*.

We recognize that education is our primary service in changing lives, and that service to others also educates them in values and improves their lives.

While we celebrate our successes in these mission areas, we are mindful of our internal and external challenges; and we work to address them with effective strategies and continuing commitment to fulfilling our mission of education and service.

Our venue continues to challenge us as we seek additional parking and facilities. In addition to a parking solution, we need a new gym and a new cafeteria, gathering spaces for students and faculty, and service offices which are consolidated for functional efficiency. We need to relocate offices to reclaim student rooms in residence halls in order to expand our traditional student body and provide accessible housing for students with special needs. In short, we need a University center!

Trustees are actively engaged in addressing these parking and space challenges through a variety of strategies, including gathering legislative support for grants and planning for

a capital campaign. But this is not the right economy in which to launch such a major fundraising effort. Instead, we are using this time to attract new friends to the University, to re-engage former friends and alumnae/i, and to shape a compelling case for financial support.

Enrollment continues to meet budget expectations for this year, including spring semester. However, we are carefully monitoring fall enrollment, since effects of the economy on students' ability to get loans and pay tuition will be more evident at that time. While our year-to-date applications and admissions for fall are up, deposits are down—a common fact at most institutions. We think students are taking a “wait and see” approach to finalizing their decisions about higher education. One thing to note about our students is the fact that they are poorer in general than students at many other institutions, and thus they qualify at greater rates for federal and state educational assistance. Despite this aid, they still bear a heavy burden of other expenses to fund their education, and we carefully review our tuition, fees, books, and other costs to respect their circumstances. Our students also tend to have more complex work and family obligations and expenses, and thus we must be sensitive to the fact that about 60 percent of our enrollment is that of adult students. Keeping their costs reasonable and keeping them on track in their progress toward degrees is essential if we are to help them achieve their goals without adding to their financial burdens. We expect to see the effect of the economy on families and on independent students starting fall semester. While our tuition-dependent budget is on target for the current year, we have no model to predict the translation of student “accepts” to “yields” (paid, enrolled) for and after fall semester. It is true that, in times of economic downturn, people turn to education to gain or enhance their skills for employment. However, the community college sector experiences an enrollment surge as people seek to achieve these short-term educational goals, especially since

they are inexpensive and rapidly responsive to short-term educational needs. We must continue to make the case for the long-term value of a private, liberal arts education, and we must continue to keep Carlow's costs affordable. We must also continue to develop programs appropriate to our mission which could meet the employment needs of the region, perhaps through continuing education options and certificate programs.

Another challenge we face is compliance with increasing federal regulations. The Internal Revenue Service and the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Opportunity Act have made changes in reporting requirements which will take extensive staff time. The reporting changes focus attention on many aspects of how we serve students, report graduation rates and program data, monitor student progress, control costs, ensure safety, and provide financial support to students to name a few of the issues. While we currently hold our heads high in areas of accountability and transparency, we welcome the opportunity to report on our progress and to meet new reporting expectations for public information. The implementation of the integrated administrative data system will be a great asset in meeting these requirements. An additional advantage of the Datatel system is that it will improve the overall quality and quantity of information available and shared for making good decisions.

Of major concern to all of us is the current state of the economy and what its effect will be on the work of Carlow University and on the gifts of donors. The simple answer is: we don't yet know the total effect since the recession has not fully run its course, and since we have no models to use from the past in meeting today's needs under these conditions. While economists differ on the means of achieving a recovery, they agree that "the patient will not be out of intensive care before the fourth quarter of this year" (Stuart Hoffman, Chief Economist for PNC). We already see effects of the economy on personal finances of those who contribute to Carlow's

annual campaign, down today by 40 percent compared to this time last year. To fill the gap, we are expanding our base of new donors, and the trustees have offered an \$80,000 challenge in our 80th year for new gifts and for higher gifts from regular donors. Thus, we still hope to meet the budgeted goal for this year's annual campaign.

Carlow uses a conservative fiscal model which enables us to state that our current financial position is sound. Because we are not a public institution and because we do not rely on endowment "draw-downs" to fund operations, we are not now forced to make cuts to existing budgets or staff. We will continue to responsibly manage our finances and adapt as needed to the issues of tuition revenue and students' financial ability to afford a Carlow education. As we move forward, we will implement even greater fiscal discipline by developing "what if" scenarios necessary to set a rational course for Carlow based upon different levels of student enrollment. This will be a collaborative effort which will engage the University community in identifying strategies to meet these challenges.

We know that some aspects of the recession have been the result of self-interest, questionable financial practices and lack of financial oversight. Selfishness, unethical behaviors, and fiscal indifference have never been characteristics of Carlow's culture. We have been committed to the service of others in all that we do, including enriching our professional competence and expanding our resources to better serve others. In making decisions at Carlow, no one chooses what is in one's individual best interest, but rather we all seek what best serves our mission and meets our obligations to students.

This will continue to be the focus of decisions as we manage through the recession. What we should not do is panic, overreact to the market place, assume that all dismal generic reports about higher education

financing apply to Carlow's situation, make dramatic tuition and fees increases, lower academic quality and standards to accommodate larger enrollment of underqualified students, make any decisions without good research, or retrench in recruitment, marketing, and fundraising...all of which attract resources to the University. We are not in crisis, but the times require careful planning, responsible stewardship of resources, establishment of clear funding priorities, and willingness to make and accept appropriate changes.

As we live through challenging economic times, as did our founders,

WE ENVISION OUR FUTURE!

Our current dialogues on the University's Vision and Strategic Plan unite the best of our historic traditions and values with the needs of the present and the anticipated needs of the future. Just as our founders 80 years ago, we are encountering pressures of the current economic environment on our ability to do all we want to do in the same way we have always done it. Through a broadbased team of constituent representatives, the University is currently developing our long-range vision and plan for the future. While we recognize that we will encounter conditions over which we might exert little control, and that there is little we can predict with certainty, we nonetheless are taking charge of shaping our future as best we can. In the spirit of our founders and with the prayers of their successors, we will chart a successful course consistent with our mission and values.

We have made significant progress on our prior goals related to vision, values, viability, visibility, venue, vitality, voices, and verifiability. Strategic goals emerging from the current planning process are focused on three main areas: defining and embracing our multifaceted identity, enhancing academic excellence, and engaging students in their total educational experience.

In our current planning, we seek to embrace in culture, curriculum, climate, and operations

the multifaceted, interrelated "identity" of our University as Catholic, Mercy-sponsored, women-centered, and liberal arts. For this we need a common understanding and application of fundamental principles which unite the many parts of our essence as Carlow University. The ground from which all these aspects of our mission flourish is faith in the dignity of the human person and faith in the human power of reason to find truth and meaning in life. While we are and are recognized as a very good institution, we know that we can improve and further enhance the quality of our academic culture, expectations, programs, and services. We claim to educate the whole person in and outside the classroom, thus providing to our students (and thus to graduates) an enhanced total educational experience which is embodied in their Carlow University degree. We are considering how we can do better in these areas. These three strategic goals will shape our future in light of our past. Collegial conversations on these three strategic goals will continue through early spring to set a clear strategic direction for the University, and I welcome your active participation. The trustees will receive the strategic plan for approval at their May meeting.

I close with some commentary on Hope. This is a word we have heard frequently in recent months during the presidential campaign. In a recent article in *Commonweal*, John Garvey wrote: "Hope is a kind of perception, a form of gratitude most evident in a time of uncertainty."

He later says: "Real certainty does not require hope. [Hope] has more to do with confidence and trust, and these take us outside ourselves, whereas certainty encysts us. In places where we must have confidence, hope or trust, we are in open places, where we are at some risk."

In his inaugural address in which hope and change were constant themes, President Obama called us to fulfill our responsibilities of citizenship. In our commitment to the mission of Carlow University during these challenging times of uncertainty, we call on each other in hope to fulfill our fundamental responsibility

for the excellence of our University. We call on each other in hope to fulfill our responsibility to serve students and each other in pursuit of our mission and in the achievement of our goals.

Pope Benedict XVI recently called us to a renewed hope as educators in Catholic institutions: “Bear witness to hope. Nourish your witness with prayer. Account for the hope that characterizes your lives by living the truth which you propose to your students.” He also called us to love through what he explained as “intellectual charity.” His message to us is this: “...charity calls the educator to recognize that the profound responsibility to lead the young to truth is nothing less than an act of love. Indeed, the dignity of education lies in fostering the true perfection and happiness of those to be educated. In practice, ‘intellectual charity’ upholds the essential unity of knowledge against the fragmentation which ensues when reason is detached from the pursuit of truth. ...Once their passion for the fullness and unity of truth has been awakened, young people will surely relish the discovery that the question of what they can know opens up the vast adventure of what they ought to do. Here they will experience ‘in what’ and ‘in whom’ it is possible to hope, and be inspired to contribute to society in a way that engenders hope in others.”

Our mission statement parallels the Pope’s message. We claim to engage our students in lifelong learning, empowering them “to think clearly and creatively; to actively pursue intellectual endeavors; to discover, challenge, or affirm cultural and aesthetic values; to respond reverently to God and others, and to embrace an ethic of service for a just and merciful world.” This mission statement does not apply only to our students; it applies to us individually and collectively as members of the Carlow University community. This mission will not be changed by economic challenges. The spirit of this mission, not the pressures of the economy, will continue to guide all our decisions about the future of Carlow University.

In its final lines, Elizabeth Alexander’s inaugural poem calls us to embrace the challenges we face:

“On the brink, on the brim, on the cusp,
praise song for walking forward in that light.”

I hope that we will walk forward together, looking back only to respect our past, honor our traditions, and learn from our mistakes or lost opportunities.

I thank you for all you daily do for Carlow University and your students, in and out of the classroom. We are all educators, and we have the unique privilege of bringing hope to others through education. We have the unique opportunity to love students with “intellectual charity” in the performance of our duties. In so doing, we honor and bring honor to our University, we do it no harm, and we guarantee that future students will experience the same quality of education that shaped and empowered their predecessors for 80 years.

I believe in the good will, talent, and commitment of colleagues at every level and in every function of the University. We each have chosen to serve this institution, to embrace its mission, and to contribute to its success and the success of our students. We have faith and hope in each other that we each deliver on our promises. Our sponsoring Sisters of Mercy share in that faith and hope, and have given us the mission we embrace. Our students have placed their faith and hope in us as well: that we will deliver on the promise of a Carlow education grounded in the values and in the freeing effects of the Catholic intellectual tradition and liberal arts. We journey with our students and with each other in our continuing pursuit of wisdom. This is the true state of our University!

Carlow University, a Catholic, women-centered, liberal arts institution embodying the heritage and values of the Sisters of Mercy, engages its diverse community in a process of life-long learning, scholarship, and research. This engagement empowers individuals to think clearly and creatively; to actively pursue intellectual endeavors; to discover, challenge, or affirm cultural and aesthetic values; to respond reverently to God and others; and to embrace an ethic of service for a just and merciful world.