

Remarks at Opening Reception – September, 2007

First let me welcome you all back to the start of the new academic year 2007-2008. This is a such a great season. The air starts to feel like fall. Our facilities are ready. The grounds crew has the campus in wonderful shape. New faculty members have been welcomed. Residence halls and staff are ready for move-in days. One in three students in the caf. have ice bags on some part of their body. I've heard the Gustie Greeters firing up the Gustie Rouser this week. Those who have been away are back and preparing for the year ahead. It's an exciting time. It's a good time.

About these remarks tonight: as you all know I don't like to spend too much time on the past - on what's already been done. Except to stop periodically and celebrate achievements, I think it's always in our best interest to keep our eyes on the important work we do every day and to glance up occasionally to take a serious look at where we're going. But as I do every year on this occasion, I would like to start with a brief look back to last year – specifically to celebrate good progress against our goals but also because it was a very good year for Gustavus. After that we'll take a quick glance out to the future.

Last week, in a tiny little hotel room in Stockholm, Sweden, I read through the remarks I made at last year's opening reception. Aside from the fact that it was quite a fine speech

– I was impressed with how much of what I hoped we could accomplish last year, we actually accomplished. To wit :

*Last fall at this opening reception, I spoke about our strategic planning process and how I hoped it would move forward more aggressively and concretely. It did. And now our new Provost has already outlined a process that will stimulate and sharpen that work even further. Faculty and staff together with the Board of Trustees will be challenged to take the next, more definitive steps. I hope you will all pay attention to her invitation to participate in that work and I hope you will respond.

* Next, last fall I called out important personnel changes planned for the year. I said I expected we'd have a great new provost in place by this fall. (We did that well!!) I said I expected we would have leadership in place for a renewed emphasis on college visibility – our marketing, communication and public relations functions. (We did that well!!) I said that I was optimistic about finding strong new leadership for our Church Relations program - and we did that well. We were looking for new leadership in the Diversity Center. Done. New leadership for the Annual Fund in the Development Offices. Done. ,and of course recruiting the sterling group of new faculty I had the chance to meet earlier this week. Done.

* Also, last fall I talked about getting the new Lavonne and Glen Johnson Center for Environmental Innovations up and running. It's now underway. You'll soon get to know the new face of that program – Dr. James Donge – brand new to our campus but not to the important work we've committed to do as one of our strategic directions - environmental stewardship.

* Last fall we started pressing more firmly on making a broader and deeper commitment to the internationalization of the campus, another of our emerging strategic directions. That's happening. Pat Quade has led the transition to new programs and a new financial model that will help to support real growth of the study abroad program. Two additional international connections were also moved forward - a new program partnership in China and renewed and strengthened connections to Sweden. And so much more yet to do!

* Last fall I spoke briefly about another of our strategic directions – an integrated campus-wide program in student leadership development. Steve Bennett, Hank Toutain, some faculty members, and others have moved this idea forward this summer with many discussions, much study and good ideas that I think will build this leadership focus into the status of a true Gustavus distinction.

* We talked last year about the academic program and its needs – specifically around the idea of engaged learning. Following that direction, more outside funding for student/

faculty research was raised last year. We have achieved – finally - the 6 course load objective. To support faculty development, The John Kendall Center for Engaged Learning was created to foster that important work. It has already attracted substantial new financial support and I'm confident that there will be more this year. Provost Morton is now outlining the next stages of our planning process that will provide more definition, more momentum and more funding for other areas of the academic program.

* Finally, we spoke briefly last year about making progress against our campus master development plan. So the west side of campus has been opened up by taking down the old football stadium and moving it over behind Lund arena and moving the baseball and athletic fields. As you have probably seen, that's done, and our first football game will be played there next weekend.

Plans can now be solidified for a new academic building and library expansion along a newly developing mall from the chapel flowing westward to the arboretum. I'm hoping that the mall running south from the chapel will also get attention in the near future.

Special thanks to Warren Wunderlich and his entire operation for their role in helping to make this a great physical environment in which to learn and live.

Great progress last year on a number of important fronts, not to mention of course, the outstanding teaching and learning that went on everyday, solid financial performance, recruitment of a great first year class for this fall and so many

other extraordinary accomplishments and personal contributions throughout the year.

So, we might ask, what's next? What about this year and beyond? What are we going to do to maintain this new momentum we've built together over the last few years? How do we imagine the future here at Gustavus?

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And here's my characterization of what the people in this book have said so far about what we should be working on next year.

One: Continue to enhance the academic program - building on academic strengths, building a stronger base of resources – for a number of purposes, building up the emerging leadership initiative with student affairs, building up the undergraduate research program, building up the Kendall Center, and building plans for additional new and renovated academic facilities.

Two. Continue in the direction of fostering integrated interdisciplinary program areas – interdisciplinary programs or centers organized around ideas where we want to create more energy and focus. Some of these will be current programs that need and deserve more support - Some will be new ventures like The Johnson Center for Environmental Innovation, The Kendall Center, and a center or a integrated program for Faith and Vocation. This is Education at the

Intersections – the intersections of academic interests and disciplines, of organizational boundaries and relationships.

Three. Develop further our positive and productive relationships with the church and its congregations. Think more about the life of faith on campus and how that plays out on an increasingly diverse campus community. Thanks to Darrel Jodoch for agreeing to lead this work and to the chaplains, CVR and the Office of Church Relations and others for their active participation.

Four. Build our emphasis on engaging with the broader world - internationalizing the campus, with long term goals of more students from abroad here on campus - more Gustavus students studying abroad - more faculty here from different countries and cultures and , I hope, new emphases in the curriculum as well.

This – together with continuing commitments to creating and supporting all forms of diversity across the campus - will also support another of our strategic directions - cultural competency.

Five. Build an initiative of environmental stewardship across the campus - and beyond. I expect that energy conservation efforts will take an especially prominent position in our work together as a community this year. We'll be looking seriously at how to better manage our environmental footprint and the influence that will have on future campus development.

You will be hearing much more about these initiatives from Mary Morton, along with the invitation to participate in their further development– this fall. This is an important opportunity. In fact, I'd suggest that positive participation in the process of carving out our future is everyone's responsibility. Please accept the Provost's invitation when it comes.

Now, needless to say, we are not without challenges that can keep us from solid progress toward these goals. Here are a few.

Externally, new legislative controls, mandates and requirements on higher education will remain a concern both on the federal and state level. The rapidly changing demographics of our prospective student body are looming ahead and that will provide new challenges to student recruitment for the Admission Office and all of us. There is certainly uncertainty about the nation's and the world's economic pictures. This directly affects our endowment performance, costs to operate the college, philanthropic activity of major donors, family ability to pay rising tuition, or to borrow reasonably enough to do so. None of these challenges are new. But all are very real. And they will have impacts on our future that we cannot control.

We'll face internal challenges too, things we can control. To illustrate, let me use a few principles of physics. (though this is an intellectually risky place for this biologist to go).

Inertia is a challenge - It's characterized as a state of rest. It's like the inability or unwillingness to move – to change position. Doing things the way they've always been done is not always a bad thing. But no change for the sake of no change in the midst of this changing world, is unacceptable. WE MUST MOVE.

Polarization can be a challenge – extreme separation resulting from opposing forces. Lets not let differences between people or groups of people on campus be allowed to stymie civil discourse, or inhibit mutual problem solving or drag down new ideas. I believe we are working at higher level of trust and cooperation across the college these days. And we all know that's critical for a healthy and productive organization. WE MUST MOVE – TOGETHER!

Thirdly, energy can be a challenge. In any physical system, lack of energy is a killer. We need the energy that comes from our mission, our values, our heritage and our visions of the future. We need constant energy that must come from everyone on campus. And we need new energy too – from new faculty and staff, from new ideas and new intellectual vigor. And most certainly we need the energy that comes with new financial resources, a challenge worthy of significant and constant effort this year. This is particularly true in light of transitions in leadership in our Institutional Advancement area. But in all areas, WE MUST MOVE – TOGETHER – WITH HIGH ENERGY.

On the one hand, plenty of challenges. On the other, I have become convinced that there is plenty of energy, motion and momentum on this campus and among our alumni and friends off campus to move through those challenges and find good light in the tunnel.

Now a question for all of us. Is it possible to maintain a high level of energy, motion and momentum during a year of presidential transition? Can we together commit to and execute on a full and active year of progress on our institutional goals, and then smoothly and seamlessly, welcome a new president into the community and into the future?

There will be ample time to talk this fall about how we do that, but I am confident that we can. And I sincerely hope that we do - because we're on a roll folks!! We can't afford to let down. So much to do! So little time! Such important stakes!

So that's my simple story about the state of the college. Gustavus has always been good. Today, we're better than we were last year and next year we'll be better yet. And beyond that? Beyond that I'll watch - from the side lines - with great pride - as Gustavus becomes greater yet!

Susan and I continue to be very grateful for the privilege to serve with you. We are honored to be here and contributing to the future of Gustavus. And we're looking forward to another full and successful year as we all MOVE - TOGETHER

– WITH HIGH ENERGY to "prepare students for fulfilling lives of leadership and service."

And thanks for listening.