

MANY VOICES ONE FUTURE

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By

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(Setting the Stage)

Can you imagine how I feel in this celebratory space? I feel great. I'm very happy this has happened to me. Let me say right away, it is my distinct privilege to be celebrated as chancellor of this great University, but today's event has to do with this community—the people in this room... Look around you... It is a great time to be in or near our university.

Thank you. Representative McCarthy, Curator Stephenson and Missouri Curators, President Pacheco, former chancellors, Mayor Barnes, Dr. Rhodes; our neighbors; my personal friends, university colleagues, students, civic leaders, citizens, and delegates representing these many sister institutions. This is our community.

And, on a personal note I am deeply proud to have with me today members of my family – my father, my children, my grandchildren, and my cousins. You are a source of inspiration to me personally; thank you for being here.

This speech is about possibilities. Many of you have heard me say: I am absolutely convinced--the real opportunity right now in higher education exists for universities located in cities. The action is in cities—the economic, social, and intellectual action is in cities. And, this particular city. Wow what a city. Kansas City is on the move; cooperation and partnerships are the *modus operandi* from science to the arts. That gives UMKC unique possibilities. And, this speech is about possibilities--- where this University is going and what we will do.

Provide me just a moment to remind you of a powerful piece of history—not John Harvard in Massachusetts or Thomas Jefferson at the University of Virginia, courageous as their visions were. For a minute, let's really go to the place where it all started, to the ancient monastery the end of the dark ages. Think about it

The monks in the monasteries of Paris, at the end of the dark ages, had the courage to walk away from a one thousand year old tradition. They abandoned the idea that the pursuit of knowledge occurred through the pursuit of a belief, a dogma. The modern university was born when those monks, embracing the spirit of Socrates and Plato, defined education as the raising of questions, not the study of belief or dogma. When they did that they re-invented western civilization. Today we talk regularly about the all important paradigm shift. There is no time in the history of our entire education when there was a greater paradigm shift than when the monastery became the academy, when dogma gave way to questioning and the age of enlightenment began. At the end of the dark ages, human kind believed in no such thing as an Atlantic Ocean. Columbus and other great discoverers pursued their passion and crossed the ocean...

I ask you: where are there today oceans restricted from our exploration by our un-liberated beliefs? This is what we're about—recognizing and crossing oceans of un-liberated beliefs. Let's not lose sight of that piece of history.

(Results)

So what of the results—what did the epiphany of the monks produce and what happened in Kansas City? Let's transition to modern times.

- Inquiry in universities is responsible for everything from ruby red tomatoes to pacemakers, from the Richter scale to quasars, from the polio vaccine to computers that build robots.
- An individual with a college degree has an income 73% higher than a person without a college degree.
- What is responsible for US economic growth over the last 50 years – three fourths of it is the rise in educational attainment and research. Our government is clear about that; it now spends \$15 billion for academic research-- the raising of questions
- We know that increased educational attainment reduces crime, increases charitable giving, increases civic life, and improves health.

Closer to home, here in Kansas City:

- UMKC has 81,000 alumnae, 60% of the living alumnae live and work in this area; they stay here to contribute.
- Our faculty and students conduct research on how human genes are expressed in proteins to cause you to become uniquely you in appearance and personality.
- Our faculty has shown the positive impact that music has on the health of children with cancer.
- Our faculty is working on technologies to unclog the traffic on the internet.
- This is my favorite: our faculty developed new composite materials for restoring teeth
(This one I've had to use)

And, by the way, both undergraduate and graduate students participate in that research).

All this because of dedication to raising questions. This history is rich; the results are impressive. But, formidable challenges remain and are juxtaposed with amazing

opportunities. Will we have the courage to raise the questions that must be raised, to recognize and cross new oceans?

(Context for us)

Reflect on our frustration with issues in K-12 education, with crime, with poverty, with racial divides. Reflect on the technology revolution, on artificial intelligence that is now approaching human intelligence. Reflect on those “bio” and “nano” words that are taking over our vocabulary—bio-engineering, biomedical, bio-informatics, nano-technology, and nano-mechanics. Reflect on our poor understanding of global climate change and on the profound ethical dilemmas that exist around all of these.

But, you know about [these](#) questions and you know that universities must engage them... Let me say to you that there are questions, perhaps the most important ones that the academy has not dared raise that we must have the courage to raise. In my view, one category of those has to do with the human spirit---by that I mean, the origins of creativity, how we know things. I ask you—how did you come to understand those things you know at the very deepest level. My guess is your response is –not through books—but through the joys and pains of your life experience. That raises questions about the nature human of consciousness—How we KNOW things. We must unabashedly bring these questions inside the dialogue and experience of university life for the sake of our students. I say: we must raise these questions.

Indeed, then, when has there ever been a time in the history of humanity, more than today, more than this very moment, when we must raise important questions.

(My Listening)

So, what do we do? Well, not surprisingly, I have given a great deal of thought to the future of higher education, a great deal of thought to the future of this institution. More importantly, I have spent the last six months --asking questions—asking most of you in this audience to tell me what you see; to express your concerns, and to dream about a future for us.

I have been in the homes—the living rooms--of UMKC's neighbors, in coffee shops, boardrooms, and government offices. I have attended classes at UMKC from “the History and Development of Rock and Roll” to “The Courts and Public Policy” I have been on the rounds with our medical students in Truman Medical Center. I have met with faculty, staff, and students. I have walked the campus, smelled its smells, learned its history, and observed its flaws. I've eaten BarBQ and Kansas City Strip steaks- I've worn my costumes for the Formal Balls as well as those for the golf course.

Our Blueprint for the Future planning group—me and a group of 80 vice chancellors, deans, faculty, staff, and students who chose to participate --- had the most exciting, personal discussions... All of these people worked side by side; we collaborated about our future. The ideas that emerged felt to me like a release of pent up creativity; the unleashing of our own human potential. We also confronted our fears; we faced the rigidly held beliefs that each of us places in the way of our imagination for UMKC. These 80 people engaged 700 more in 60 separate dialogue sessions across the university, asking—what do you think? As a newcomer, I experienced their dreams coming alive; today I say thank you. In short, we listened to the many voices that make up our communities--the communities seated around you.

(FUTURE)

And, now -- what are those voices saying? They say: these times call for new standards of excellence in higher education.

UMKC will respond by defining the new standards for higher education. Let me repeat that: UMKC will define the standards for higher education. We accept the certain fact that the measures of success are changing; the old criteria will not sustain us. Perhaps it is not a paradigm shift like the one at the end of the dark ages, but it calls for a significant adjustments for higher education. A few universities will have the courage to respond to the times and define the new. UMKC will be one of those. Right now at this University, in Kansas City, in the year 2000, nothing else--nothing else—nothing else--is worth doing.

Let me just touch on four themes that begin to put some meat on those new standards. I believe you will see these threaded through all we do.

First, Defining New Standards Means We Are All a Community of Learners.

It turns out that the learners have inherited the earth. It turns out: we are all students -- as administrators, faculty and staff and community. The age, space, and time boundaries are blurred and will soon are gone. Who we teach, how we teach, what we teach, and where we teach are being redefined – new learners, new pedagogies for learning, new curricula, new spaces, and new times. The future belongs to those who respond aggressively and thoughtfully to defining the new standards for learning.

Second, Defining New Standards Means A Campus With No Borders.

Now you may think that is a theme made possible because of satellites and robust fiber optics networks. Not so, a campus with no borders is actually an old idea that lost its way. It is the central theme of the original vision for public research universities -- the idea that raising questions by first listening to the issues and then responding with degree programs and research projects. To us, defining new standards as a campus without borders means we will listen to this community before responding with outreach efforts and new curricula. Only in this way can our university take its place as a prime mover in the success of this city.

Third, Defining New Standards Means Recommitting to Academic Excellence.

The summary of accomplishments of universities that I provided you a minute ago suggests that we better not tinker too much with the foundations of academic excellence in the American research university. A couple of dimensions of UMKC are defining, however. UMKC will focus, in order to establish pinnacles of excellence that build on our three traditional areas of strengths. This is happening quite literally before our eyes in those three areas in KC: the health sciences, arts, and urban affairs. And we will also nurture to excellence any activity that shows itself to be serving this community and asking the questions that explode restrictive beliefs in that field. In short, for us, defining new standards of excellence for us means we build on our strengths and nurture innovation.

Fourth, Defining New Standards Means Unleashing Human Potential.

My own view is that UMKC's success is dependent on this theme above all others. Let me explain. When I ask people -- what will allow us to step up to the challenge and opportunities of our time? 99% of the time the response is -- money, we

don't have enough money. Rest assured, we need resources-lots of them. But, my response to that question is always: Money follow results. Results -- these dreams for students, for this community, and for excellence can happen only by unleashing the human potential in this enterprise. I say: -- perhaps what restricts our own capacity to define the standards may just be our beliefs about the culture of the university itself. Some of our culture serves us well, but there are also dogmas that put a lid on our potential. You know it and I know it.

If we can create a condition at UMKC that allows people to talk about their dreams, we will succeed for our students, for this community, and in the world of real excellence. I am committed to an environment that is about creativity, humor, joyful living, and relationships in our community of learners. Unleashing the human potential at UMKC is my first and top priority as Chancellor.

So, we start with four themes: Six years from now: I want to hear you say with conviction: UMKC defines the new standards for higher education; ONE because it represents a community of all kinds of learners, TWO because it is a campus without borders listening first and then responding, THREE because it demonstrates academic excellence in the areas it chooses, and FOUR because it unleashes human potential.

Pipe dream you say? Well at this moment I would guess there are more than a few skeptics in this room. A week ago I received an email that probably captures a few thoughts in this room. It was from a very sincere individual who indicated he had substantial experience in the marketing industry. The email said---AND I QUOTE "Chancellor—I reviewed the material on the Blueprint for the Future web site---It's good but it's too bold. People will hear it as unrealistic and therefore, dismiss it" END

QUOTE The email brought me up short but, on reflection, I was happy he said the Blueprint was bold. You should know that we discussed in our planning group the distinction between bold and a pipedream. This is not a pipedream. It is bold. And, we can expect people to step up only for a bold vision.

I do understand the skepticism, and we will have to prove ourselves, but let me distinguish some factors that should encourage you.

If you had been in the room with me and heard the dreams of this planning group, your skepticism would be severely shaken. I saw no lack of courage in that group. Success comes when people of courage give us a taste of the possible. The boldness you hear in the blueprint is a manifestation of that courage.

You can also be assured that we will hold ourselves accountable. Each of the four themes has measures of success—conditions we must meet in order to say we accomplished it. Results we commit to achieve 6 years out. Each of the four theme leaders will be a member of my cabinet. The activities of these themes will drive the budget, my time allocation, and that of my vice chancellors.

And we have identified the concrete projects that will get us started. Everything in my life experience tells me that, in order to accomplish your dreams, you have to take step one and then step two. We have taken step one and these concrete projects represent step two... I will mention only a couple in order to give you a flavor.

- First, we announce today the Center for the City at UMKC; the Center has the charge to listen first. It has a director, a physical location on Troost; it includes endowed professorships, a new relationship with the UM System Extension Division, and an extended partnership with the Kauffman Foundation

- Second: Our Life Sciences Initiative: We commit to aggressive participation in Kansas City's bold dreams to shine in the life sciences. We have a new agreement with the Stowers Medical Research Institute. We will expand capacity in life sciences research and integrate certain curricula in order to have some of those new bio words be part of UMKC's offerings. .
- Third: I am happy to announce The Center for Study of Creativity. Made possible through an agreement with the Belger Family, we make available to you 600 works of 5 contemporary artists as well as hundreds of their letters, papers, and manuscripts—Most of the work of 5 artists--unheard of in its depth. This is not about a collection or a museum. This is a Study Center about creativity ---how we KNOW things.
- There are numerous other concrete projects that express our themes and build on the strength provided by our long term friends in this community.
- The emergence of each of these concrete projects begins to define the new standards.

(Leadership: What are our roles?)

Converting this dream to reality is up to all of us.

I hope that is clear by now that I am here today not to advance a set of restrictive beliefs put forward in the form of my administrative agenda. I am not here today to celebrate the installation of a new individual or to simply carry forward the ceremonial duties of a university chancellor. I am here today to ask your commitment to an agenda that we –our faculty and staff, our community's leaders and citizens, and our students—can build, shape, and, yes,

accomplish together. This is your agenda. And now your agenda is becoming mine and I love it.

Today is indeed about leadership, but not just my leadership. The challenge offered today is for each and every one of us to lead. Each of us is a causal force in the failure or success of these dreams. So, let me finish with some challenges. It will be hard to define the new standards.

To my learned colleagues on the faculty, I start with you because your leadership is vital. You hold in your intellectual and experiential authority the keys to the locks on the knowledge our nation and our community wants and needs. I challenge each and every one of you to keep no secrets from us in the exercise of your leadership. The license of tenure is one of the most sacred granted to human; difficult to acquire; almost impossible to be removed. It is that very license that enables participation; it enables courage; it enables your ability to speak truth to yourselves. Don't allow it to become nothing more than a piece of paper on the wall; don't lose it. Get involved. Raise the questions that only you can raise. Help us find the answers that only you, with our support, can find.

To my fellow administrators I say, just as we must strive to make real our university without walls, we must advance an administrative team without turf. The geography of your office, the size of your budget, the number of people reporting to you, do not your power make. Our duty is to lead, lead by listening for opportunities to remove the barriers to what this faculty and community see we must do. Our power comes from being the enablers.

To our students, I say you are not our most precious commodity; you are our most precious community. We owe you the education that starts with basics but that is completed only through the enlightenment. You should expect nothing less of us. And, you are our most

important customers, but I must challenge you to be sure you engage the wisdom and experience that comes uniquely from the individuals of this institution. You are here because you have something to learn from us and we want very much to fulfill that expectation.

To our alumnae, our civic leaders, and our citizens, I offer an expression of gratitude. Thank you for your respect, your partnership, and your patronage. And as we continue to earn your confidence, we will unabashedly ask for your deeper and broader participation with us as your partner. We cannot do this alone. Let me challenge you by asking you: how will you help us make this possible.

To those of you that have traveled from afar, share your ideas with us; partner with us; work with your institutions.

Leadership, for all of us is fundamentally about taking initiative and assuming responsibility. It is not about control, direction, or knowing what is best for others—although that is what people often believe. I will not determine the desired future without you and I am only beginning to learn what is best for you. I promise to do my part: I will take initiative; I will assume responsibility; and I will remind you that the foundations of bold action reside in human potential. This is our future; we own it jointly. Please know that I accept with pride my duty to lead and be accountable for it; know too that is what I want from you-- your participation.

There is nothing small in our dreams. There is nothing small in our determination to skip today's paradigm of success and create the standards that will shape the future of higher education. There is nothing small in these Many Voices pointing to One Future. Defining the new standard will require all of us—every person in this room—to challenge some of our most cherished beliefs. And this will happen through the inspired creativity of the human

imagination. Imagination! It was Jules Verne who told us: “anything human kind can imagine, humanity can create”

We in this room have the capacity of inspired imagination to create it, to know what we want for this institution and, most importantly, we have the ability to get it done. Exercise your imagination with me. You can count on me—my passion, my courage, and my leadership. Together, our imagination can change the very landscape of higher education.

THANK YOU