



**Address Delivered at the Loftus Dinner
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I would indeed be remiss were I to commence these few brief remarks without expressing my sincere thanks for the honor bestowed on me this evening. I am truly grateful. Thank you. Moreover, I wish to add my congratulations to those recipients of various awards for years of dedicated teaching, service, and support on behalf of Iona College. I have noticed that over the years the College has varied its inspirational motto. Today it is “Move the World.” Some time ago it was, “The Proof is in the People.” It is on an occasion such as this Loftus Dinner that we especially focus on the people who have made the college the fine educational institution that it has been for the past 75 years.

I first set foot on this campus in 1945 to commence teaching third grade in a building that later became Columba Hall and has since been replaced by a parking lot. At that time the College consisted of one building, Cornelia Hall, without the two wings, which were added years later. Although it was not until 1971 that I joined the College faculty, the fortunes and welfare of the College were always of interest to me. I personally have known all the College presidents and at various times lived with most of them. I rejoice in the College’s growth and development and hope for and, indeed, anticipate a long future of continued accomplishment.

I often reflect that these are parlous times for higher education. Although not directly concerned with education, Thomas Friedman’s book “The World is Flat” documents in great detail the rapidly changing world at the dawn of the 21st century. These changes, especially in information technology, and their impact on society pose serious concerns for higher education – concerns which always warrant thoughtful discussion and where needed, decisive action. Often the very worth of a liberal education has been called into question. “We need more welders and fewer philosophers,” recently declared one presidential candidate. Really! And the governor of Kentucky suggested that students majoring in French literature, for example, should not receive state funding. Indeed, funding for higher education is in jeopardy on a number of fronts. When I overhear discussions concerning revisions of the core curriculum and other proposals and innovations apropos

courses and methods I am confident that Iona is wisely alert to the challenging issues facing college education.

It would be rash on my part to offer any suggestions. During all my years of teaching, however, I have entertained two strongly felt convictions. One is that regardless of the subject matter, each discipline if taught with rigor, imagination, and passion has the capability of achieving the basic goals of college education, namely, although not exclusively, clarity of thought, prudent judgment, and wise decision making. True, there is a unique body of knowledge specific to each discipline, but knowledge is not the highest of intellectual goods. Of higher value is understanding, and beyond that wisdom. Of that feminine being the Book of Sirach declares, "Before all things else wisdom was created."

And, on a second note. It is very likely that each of us recalls a particular teacher, whether in grade school, high school, or wherever, who impressed us not solely for erudition or pedagogical skill but chiefly for what can best be described as a certain warmth of human kindness, a personal touch. This characteristic flows not just from a love of the subject matter but more so from a true concern, a love if you will, of the persons, the students with whom the teacher is in communication. Among other definitions, communication is the sharing of thoughts and feelings. It has always been my conviction that teaching, yes, even on a college level, requires a revelation of the person of the teacher herself or himself. This is accomplished when knowledge is not merely parceled out but rather is refracted through the peculiar intellect, experience, and personality of the teacher. As someone once said, "What you ultimately teach is yourself." In D. H. Lawrence's novel, "The Rainbow," one of the heroines, Ursula Brangwen, enters Nottingham College all enthusiastic, only to become disillusioned when she meets professors who, as the novel narrates "were only middle-men handling wares they had become so accustomed to that they were oblivious of them. College had become a second hand dealer's shop and one bought an equipment for an examination." The description of her experience is a cautionary tale for teachers.

In his Harvard Divinity School address of 1838, Ralph Waldo Emerson was speaking of a preacher not a teacher, whom he had heard, but his comments are pertinent to the thought I wish to express. He said that compared to the reality of the snow storm that could be seen swirling outside the church, the minister was merely spectral. "The preacher," states Emerson, "had no one word intimating that he had ever laughed or wept, was married or in love, had been commended, or

cheated, or chagrined. The capital secret of his profession, to convert life into truth, he had not learned. The true preacher (read teacher) can be known by this, that he deals out to the people his life—life passed through the fire of thought.”

I have thoroughly enjoyed over 30 years of teaching college students. I am convinced that this dimension of the personal, a truly human element, is a quality in a teacher that our college students hardly can adequately articulate and rarely, if ever, express, yet sorely are in search of and need. It would be sad if – to borrow words from Milton’s poem “Lycidas” – “the hungry mouths look up and are not fed.”

It is my well-considered judgment, however, that the teachers and all the personnel associated with Iona College have always nurtured in an exemplary way the needs and longings of our young men and women students. May they ever continue to do so. Thank you.