

State of the University – October 26, 2017
Gregory P. Crawford

OPENING REMARKS AND GRATITUDE

Good Afternoon.

When recent graduate Quinton Couch, senior Jackson Gray, and Bowling Green student Tyler Brezina lost their close high school friend to suicide, the young men felt stunned and powerless. As the months passed, they turned grief and sadness into action. Quinton, Jackson, and Tyler took their passion for the open waters and turned it into a journey of awareness, fundraising, and meaning. They kayaked and canoed 981 miles down the Ohio River, raising much needed funding for suicide prevention and shining a spotlight on an often-overlooked crisis. On the river, arms tired and hands covered in blisters, the young men learned the powerful lesson of community as friends and strangers encouraged them on; as they realized how they needed one another to finish the trek; as they saw how love and honor can inspire others. Jackson and Quinton connected families, communities, and the nation to Miami through a single selfless act.

To consider the State of Miami University is to experience a deep gratitude for this remarkable institution –its rich legacy, its dynamic culture, and, above all, its people. Like every strong human community, we find our identity in our values and mission. Miami has Love and Honor at our core. Those ideals guide our thoughts, our decisions, and our actions across all of our campuses. Love and Honor – it’s what Jackson and Quinton displayed on their journey. It is who we are.

Miami University enjoys an outstanding reputation across the country and around the world. We are ranked among the best universities in the country in many categories. I attribute that to our outstanding faculty, staff, students, alumni, and partners.

This legacy provides us with a singular opportunity to become THE university of the future – by connecting the world to Miami; building community at Miami; and changing that world through Miami. To accomplish these lofty goals, we must unite across our diverse experiences to fashion Miami’s future. Today, I wish to highlight many accomplishments over the past year. I also want to share with you some of the opportunities and challenges we will face in our path forward. Let me begin by thanking the people who make Miami University what it is.

At Miami, faculty conduct research *and* serve as mentors, as they welcome students to explore the unknown. We have extraordinary faculty here at Miami who put their heart and passion toward our students every day – it is why our reputation as a student-centered institution is so strong. Dr. Suzanne Kunkel, a Miami University Distinguished Professor of Gerontology, inspires students to care about the elderly and forms a new generation of people who honor the aged. She connects Miami to the world. She exemplifies a community of scholars who believe in the potential of this generation to enhance the lives of us all. To Dr. Kunkel and all of her faculty colleagues, I say, “Thank you.”

The bedrock of our university is our staff. I see their kindness and genuine outreach to students every day. Sue Sepela and Amy Stander from our regional campuses were instrumental in winning a federal Upward Bound grant for Miami's Hamilton campus. With that grant, we partner and connect with Hamilton City Schools to help hundreds of low-income students prepare for college and for a career. Like Sue and Amy, our staff across all our campuses provides the indispensable support that makes this education possible. Together, they build connections in the community that advance our mission. To Sue and Amy and the thousands of wonderful Miami staff, I say, "Thank you."

Our undergraduate students hail from every state and many foreign countries, enriching our community with their diversity, their compassion, and their dedication to the lives we lead. Darsh Parthasarathy is a junior international student who exemplifies the service, thoughtfulness, and professionalism that I want the world to know as Miami. Darsh is a Student Intern in the Office of Diversity Affairs. She works with a plethora of organizations, including Associated Student Government. Another example: Kelsi White, a student-athlete who graduated this year, won just about every award and accolade for her work on and off the field. Kelsi was president of a student committee for the Mid-American Conference on student-athletes for a year, and now that she's in law school, she maintains a leadership role in the conference, providing an important connection for Miami. And, Josh Sweet is nothing if not persistent in his desire to get his diploma from Miami University. A triple major (community arts at the Regionals, as well as arts management and entrepreneurship in Oxford) and actively involved in campus life. Beside his studies, Josh is a student employee for the Hamilton campus Tutoring and Learning Center, is the social media coordinator for Hamilton campus Pride, the web coordinator for Hamilton campus Student Government Association, and is doing his service-learning project with the Fitton Center for Creative Arts. To Darsh, Kelsi, and Josh, and their fellow students who teach us about our community and the world, I say, "Thank you."

Our graduate students come to advance our knowledge of the world around us. Thaiesha Wright is a third-year biochemistry doctoral student from Tampa, a first-generation college student who came to us from Spelman College. She's already presented at two professional conferences, and her work on protein activity and stability has been published in two academic journals. Thaiesha is also engaged in many organizations that elevate our campus life. Graduate students model the intellectual curiosity, courage, and determination required along the journey of discovery to uncover unexpected insights. They have a passion to connect the discoveries at Miami with others who will benefit. To Thaiesha and our graduate and professional students, I say, "Thank you."

Brothers Andy and Jon Nielsen were Miami students over a decade ago. They are now CEO and CBO of "Everything But the House," the premier online estate sale marketplace, an entrepreneurial company that employs more than 1,000 people. The brothers' courage to invest and their will to persevere took a simple idea and turned it into something big and global. We are grateful and humbled when they give back with generosity, service, and volunteerism that empower us to carry this legacy into the future. To Andy and Jon and our incredible alumni changing the world every day, I say, "Thank you."

Our Board of Trustees at Miami stands strong and united with us as we advance the university together. They support us. They steer us. They connect us with our stakeholders. They collaborate

with us to chart our future. Their loyalty to Miami is unfaltering and resolute. To our Chairman of the Board, Mark Ridenour, and all those who are serving or have served, I say, “Thank you.”

As a strong public university, we must recognize our responsibility to support our society’s greatness and sense of community. Leaders in the state of Ohio and our citizens understand the vital role of higher education in building a better future. We are here to advance Ohio. We are connected to our state’s success. We have strengths to address Ohio’s highest priorities and expertise to tackle some of its broadest challenges. We hold our public university status in Ohio with pride and with gratitude for Ohio’s support and connection to our campuses. To our partner of 208 years, I say, “Thank you.”

My first full year as president of Miami gave me so many rich opportunities to learn about our community, simply by listening to those who know it best. I visited nearly every unit in all of our campuses, including Luxembourg. I also spent quality time with our alumni, our colleagues in other universities, our partners in industry and philanthropy, our representatives in Columbus, and our neighbors in Oxford, Hamilton, Middletown, and West Chester.

These members of the Miami family create a powerful synergy that propels us to live our values and to achieve our purposes, both individually and as a whole. Together, we face the unprecedented challenges in higher education and society in the 21st century. Together, we aspire to provide the solutions to many of our most pressing problems. But to maximize our contributions, we must become even more connected – within our university community, to our individual communities, among our disciplines, and to opportunities yet unknown.

I’d like to read to you what one university founder wrote to attract students to his new institution: “We will allow you to live in a place where everything is in abundance, where the homes are sufficiently spacious, where the customs of everyone are affable, and where one can easily transport by sea or land what is necessary to human life. To them we offer all useful things, good conditions, for them we will look for teachers, promise goods and offer prizes to those who are worthy of it.”

Sounds pretty inviting, doesn’t it? The university founder who wrote these words was Emperor Frederick II. The school was the University of Naples. The year was 1224. But so much resonates across nearly 800 years – this abundant place called Miami, the state-of-the-art residence halls, the commitment to Love and Honor in a diverse and supportive community, the useful access to world-class faculty and scholarship, the great rewards of the Miami Experience.

Today, we find ourselves in a world of fast change, accelerated dynamism, and intense global competition. We can live and thrive in this place in the 21st century, but we must embrace change to advance. If we are going to graduate scholars, inventors, teachers, artists, engineers, designers, architects, business professionals, entrepreneurs, and change agents, we must be creative, and imaginative, and courageous. So what is the vision for our student-centered campuses in 2025 or 2030? – our student-centered pedagogy, our residence life, our first-year experience, our experiential learning?

The answers come in the context of the challenges and opportunities of the modern world, including the rapidly shifting demographics of a more diverse nation. We must build a campus community that

fully integrates and connects living, learning, and preparation for future careers. We must solve social problems that hinder individuals' and communities' paths to success. We must leverage the power of technology and Big Data in the context of our student-centric mission, our teacher-scholar model, and our liberal arts tradition. We must break down silos and work collaboratively in creative initiatives that never waver in our commitment to innovate and integrate.

Within the lifetime of our current students, we will live in a nation so diverse there will be no ethnic majority. We are committed to reflect this change in our own campuses' diversity – overcoming stereotypes, building community, finding synthesis in a multitude of ideas and perspectives. Diversity is core to our mission and our educational pedagogy. In addition to racial and ethnic diversity, our student-centered mission drives us to expand our socioeconomic diversity with affordability and access. Our impact will uplift both individuals and families, accelerate social mobility, and empower students of all backgrounds to achieve the American dream.

We will also transform the way students live and study in a holistic experience of increased intellectual integration in the residence halls. Living-learning communities will be open, inclusive spaces where students study, create, connect, and discover. Our residence halls will form distinctive spaces for stimulating conversation and productive collaboration. They will become extensions of our learning environment, places of engagement with fellow students, with faculty, with mentors, and with professionals who will help each student find the best place to apply their education for impact.

Our regional campuses will be places of access and affordability for students, including those non-traditional students pivoting in a new career direction. Some students may return to campus multiple times throughout their careers to retool and retrain. All of our campuses will be more interconnected to advance Miami as a whole.

We will strive to build the safest and healthiest environment of any university's campus. Miami is not alone in facing ever-increasing challenges of alcohol, sexual and interpersonal violence, and untreated mental health concerns. We must do everything we can to create the safest and healthiest environment for our students to live, study, learn, socialize, and connect. These issues are at the heart of our student-centric mission – we must continuously advance our support for the safety, health, and well-being of our students, to bond as a community, to engage in lived self-awareness.

As technology advances, there will be more opportunities to discover and interact with unprecedented volumes of information and data. More data has been created in the past two years than in all of previous human history. We must seize this opportunity and strategically leverage these innovative tools while keeping our focus on the person-to-person education at the heart of our student-centered mission. We must create programs that build the talent that the growing digital world demands, for the entirely new kinds of jobs that this dynamic economy will generate.

While this new phenomenon offers rich benefits for education, research, and society, it raises important questions about how we will operate as an institution. These tools can enhance but never replace the value of the lived community of scholarship, service, learning, and face-to-face engagement with new ideas and new people. As our mission declares, we believe that “a liberal education is grounded in qualities of character and intellect.” Data will not develop your character,

and information is necessary but not sufficient for intellect. The best way to learn is to live in a community of learners.

Society often looks to universities and scholars to solve highly complex problems, from climate change, data and analytics, the human genome, global health, educational equity, sustainable housing, nuclear proliferation, political participation, international trade, individual rights, and so forth. In this interconnected and cross-disciplinary world, we must remain experts in our fields.

However, the complexity of the world problems will require convergence of our expertise and collaboration among our disciplines. Transdisciplinary education among disciplines is like diversity and inclusion among people – it brings together different backgrounds, perspectives, experiences, cultures, and ideas. Discipline-specific, transdisciplinary, transformative learning that begins on campus will reach out into our partnerships and society.

All of these aspirations require resources. We must find them. We cannot burden the state of Ohio beyond its means and we must not burden our students beyond their means. We must fulfill our responsibility to provide students with access to education without incurring debt, hindering them from fully engaging the world when they graduate. The future of our student-centered mission will depend on our financial stability and sustainability. To establish such a model and an affordable Miami Experience, we must think differently, be more creative, and connect in more dynamic ways – with philanthropy, with partners, with other institutions, with communities, with the region, nation and world.

These are just some of the opportunities and challenges we face moving forward. Miami University will build on its legacy, elevate its strengths, and guarantee its future in three concrete ways:

- (1) We will connect the world to Miami.
- (2) We will build the community at Miami.
- (3) We will change the world through Miami.

These aspirations are intimately connected with our mission to educate and create value for society and humanity through our life and learning. This is the fundamental purpose of a university: to liberate each person's power for a meaningful life and career. Let me describe each in some detail.

CONNECTING THE WORLD TO MIAMI

We recognize that success in the 21st century requires meaningful connections that include all voices willing to contribute to our common progress, adding creativity, imagination, and innovation to the conversation. Therefore, we commit ourselves to welcoming a diversity of people and ideas.

We draw confidence from our history of success at inclusion. When I look through the lens of Miami's heritage as a public university, I see some remarkable hallmarks. Our founders set out to prepare young men on the frontier for economic and civic leadership in the new republic. Miami first welcomed women in 1887. Miami graduated the first African American in 1905. In the early 1970s, Miami established a relationship with the Miami Tribe, and in 2001, the precursor to the Myaamia

Center connected us to our namesake Tribe. In 2004, we were among the first in the state to provide same-sex partner benefits. Our Code of Love and Honor declares we will “welcome a diversity of people, ideas, and experiences,” and our alma mater affirms: “Of all races, from all nations.” Diversity is one way we connect the world to Miami.

We are making progress. This year’s freshman class is the most diverse ever – approximately one fourth of the first-year class – nearly double the 2008 entering class. We have more than 3,000 international students this year, 250 more than last year. Our connection with the world is two-way – last year, nearly 2,000 Miami students studied around the globe. Almost half of our undergraduates study abroad sometime for academic credit, making us a leader among undergraduate public doctoral universities. Last May, we opened the Miami University-Sanya University American Cultural Center in China’s Hainan province.

Our Bridges program continues to attract a diverse group of students. Our message is clear to our Bridges students – diversity and inclusion are top priorities and core values, so “come join us!” Join us because we offer a path to a bright future for you and your families. Join us because at Miami, you will be known, welcomed, respected, and supported. Join us because you enrich our discussion and reflection in our classrooms and on our campuses.

I would like to recognize Professor Rodney Coates for creating opportunities for local youth and connecting us to Cincinnati. Rodney has collaborated with the Provost’s Office and Enrollment Management and Student Success, to establish a new program with the Cincinnati Public Schools that will create a pipeline of diverse public school students to Miami University.

Our faculty diversity has increased, but we can – and will – do more. I want to recognize the work of Carolyn Craig, one of our faculty members, who leads the Association of Black Faculty and Staff. Carolyn is building partnerships and inclusivity across organizations such as the Association of Latino/Latina Faculty and Staff and Asian and Asian-American Faculty and Staff Association. Thank you, Carolyn, and all members of our community who are committed to diversity and inclusion.

Our work on accessibility is rapidly advancing. Our staff is working hard to expand access, including online, for an equitable college experience. Professor Ashley Johnson has created a fully-accessible space in McGuffey, an innovation sparked in her disabilities studies class. Instructor and alum Dan Darkow, with his service dog, Julep, teaches a class there. Our transdisciplinary Center for Assistive Technology in Engineering collaborates broadly across campus to engineer solutions that improve the quality of life for people with disabilities.

This year, we had the opportunity to elevate Miami’s commitment to diversity and inclusion at a national level. We signed on to the CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion, an initiative including more than 300 businesses and five universities that pledge to share best practices and ideas. One outcome of this effort is our Office of Institutional Diversity has been rolling out unconscious bias training campus-wide this year.

Elevating our welcoming and inclusive environment is an ongoing evolution, not a race with a finish line. We are well into our first Climate Survey in 13 years, an opportunity for everyone who serves at

Miami to provide feedback and perspective on our climate. Once the feedback is analyzed, we will act to improve our environment. We are eager to connect your insights from across our campuses to strengthen our community.

In addition to reflecting diversity, as I described, we are committed to engaging diversity and learning from diversity. This involves too many groups and events to mention here. A few examples are the Freedom Summer Dialogue Series, Provost Inclusion Series, Performing Arts President Series on Inclusivity, and the Inclusion Symposium. In terms of connecting to Oxford, Kate Rousmaniere, our Professor in Educational Leadership and Mayor of Oxford, has boldly declared: “Not in our town.” Oxford invited Miami to connect in the national Not in Our Town initiative, and hundreds of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community residents have taken its pledge for inclusion.

Miami has embraced the legacy of Western College in diversity and social justice. I witnessed the power of this heritage at Mount Zion Church in Philadelphia, Mississippi, where we received the 2017 Civil Rights and Social Justice Award from the National Civil Rights Conference with the Western College Alumnae Association. Our own Ann Elizabeth Armstrong, Professor of Theatre, received an award for her work with the Freedom Summer Memorial.

We have bold aspirations for our future. One of our primary focuses in the future will be raising funds for scholarships and support for programs and curriculum to attract the best students to our campuses – it will be a significant focus of our efforts. Take, for example, need-based scholarships and socioeconomic diversity. We believe that a college education will lift individuals and families upward to achieve their dreams and our nation’s promise. Students from all socioeconomic backgrounds enrich our living and learning environment as we all prepare for the future. Need-based scholarships will be one of our top priorities in our upcoming campaign in order to empower those who do not have sufficient resources to attend Miami – and to enrich the Miami experience for everyone.

We will continue our aggressive support of our programs and events on diversity and inclusion, organized by our faculty, staff, and students. These enable us to assemble as a community, discuss our perspectives, learn from each other, enrich our understandings, and practice more effective citizenship. We will continue support for our distinctive faculty research and scholarship focused on diversity, equity, equality, racism, sexuality, and social justice. We already have more than 150 such projects underway on our campuses, including several funded this year by Provost Callahan and Associate Provost Oris.

As we engage and learn from diversity across our campuses, I want to announce a most significant event this weekend at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati. Wil Haygood, Class of 1976, will present his new book, *Showdown: Thurgood Marshall and the Supreme Court Nomination That Changed America*, and Jeff Pegues, Class of 1992, CBS News’ Justice and Homeland Security Correspondent, will present his new book, *Black and Blue: Inside the Divide between the Police and Black America*. These Miamians are having a powerful impact on the nation, and we are proud they are part of our family of Love and Honor.

We are also excited to announce that beginning this year, the Office of Institutional Diversity will award an annual Freedom of '64 Award. The award will reflect our Freedom Summer heritage and our commitment to social justice and civil rights.

Our connections to the world, welcoming “a diversity of people, ideas, and experiences,” empower us to build our community. We must connect the world to Miami.

BUILDING THE COMMUNITY AT MIAMI

We will build the community at Miami on our strong student-centric foundation of unparalleled undergraduate teaching and innovative learning as well as on scholarship at the graduate level. Academic and residence life will be more fully integrated, with broader campus-wide engagement, health and wellness services, alumni interaction, and career development services. Health and safety will be safeguarded and enhanced. We will promote camaraderie, connection, and loyalty through special events, performances, service projects, athletics, and inviting spaces for the Miami community to gather.

Our Oxford campus is a residential setting in a beautiful part of our state. Students can choose from many types of universities – online, in urban settings, even first-year international experiences. We must ask: what value does the residential campus add to our students' education? What will be our distinctive advantage on all our campuses? How will we build inclusivity and connections among our campus communities?

We draw confidence from our history of success across our campuses. Miami has been a pioneer in the establishment of residence halls as living-learning communities. We have invested significantly in state-of-the-art residence halls in recent years. On our regional campuses, we were one of the first in Ohio with open access campuses for students to share our common mission. Middletown just celebrated its 50th anniversary, and Hamilton will soon. Both campuses have deep connections to their communities. Next fall, we will admit our first cohort of Oxford students to the Regionals' nursing program. Students will complete two years at Oxford and their last two years on the regional campuses.

We are making progress. Just last month, thanks to the generosity of Mike and Anne Armstrong, we dedicated the new East Wing of Armstrong Center, a testament to our student-centric focus. The space is a big family room where we can gather informally for conversation, fun, and socializing, or engage career services in applying for that internship or job.

This year we did a full review of our student health services. Let me start with mental health. Associated Student Government met with me and presented to the Board of Trustees on mental health and their concerns for our students – particularly wait times for counseling. As a result, we have added new counselors and mental health practitioners. My admiration and gratitude go out to our Associated Student Government for calling attention to this issue.

One of the gravest challenges to the health and safety of college students, including here at Miami, is alcohol abuse, especially high-risk drinking. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

reports staggering statistics on physical assaults, sexual violence, and deaths related to alcohol on college campuses nationwide. One-fifth of college students meet the criteria for Alcohol Use Disorder. Especially alarming: many college students sometimes have 10 to 15 drinks in an evening with the intent to black out. High-risk drinking and blacking out are life-threatening.

It is important to note that these activities are the exception, not the norm, at Miami. We attract and develop students of excellent character and intellect, and most Miami students either don't drink or make legal, low-risk choices. Over 4,000 students took the first annual Healthy Miami survey administered by faculty in March, revealing that a relatively small percentage of students engage in these dangerous and high-risk behaviors.

We must continue to do more. High risk drinking and blacking out simply cannot continue. It consumes the resources of our first responders. It is a direct contradiction to our values and our identity as a community of ideas and positive impact. It reflects negatively on our academic reputation that generations have built. It diminishes the Miami Experience for those who engage in it and for others, even those not participating.

We are shifting the conversation to address the issue. Rather than reacting to the costs of these behaviors, we must emphasize to everyone the benefits of good health and help them make healthy choices. Excellent health is necessary for gaining the greatest value from the Miami experience. Together, we must become the model of a healthy and safe community. We have instituted many initiatives. For example, we have partnered with The Haven at College to provide support so those struggling with addiction can stay in school and achieve their goals. We have highlighted the Good Samaritan Policy to ensure that those who overdo it get medical help. I appreciate those who step up and make the call.

Now I am calling all of us to action as One Miami. For students who need help – we care about you and want you to succeed. For all the rest of us at Miami, I say: Be a good friend before you have to be a Good Samaritan. Care for your fellow Miamians by helping them avoid high-risk drinking – it is our responsibility to them and to our community. To those landlords and proprietors in our area, I ask you to keep working with us toward solutions that end illegal, high-risk alcohol consumption. As a caring and united community, we will turn this around. Our students will help lead the way. I salute the Miami Student for its outstanding documentary, high-risk, that raised awareness on this issue and its particular challenges here at Miami. I'm also grateful to the marketing capstone Highwire – which is working on student-developed innovative responses to this issue.

With respect to sexual and interpersonal violence – one assault is one too many. We have enhanced our patrols at night to assist those in need. I thank the Miami University and Oxford police and all first responders – We owe them a debt of gratitude. We encourage victims to come forward and report. We are proud to partner with Women Helping Women, an organization that offers hope to survivors, inspires communities to speak out loudly and act boldly, and educates all to prevent sexual and interpersonal violence before it occurs.

This is a straightforward requirement of our life together – caring for fellow Miamians in Love and Honor. There must be no more uninvolved bystanders at Miami. If you are standing by when you see

wrong behavior, you must stand up to it or call. All of the initiatives and partnerships for student health and well-being cannot substitute for friends and fellow students who do the right thing. Every student must be a responsible custodian of that Miami name, its principles, and the values we all uphold.

With respect to the physical plant, our overall residence hall infrastructure is exceptional. Two new residence halls will open in 2018 on the north end of the Oxford campus, and more will be renovated across campus. With this infrastructure in place, we can be bold in our vision for Miami so we can advance residential life, intellectual engagement, academic integration, and healthy living.

We have bold aspirations. Our nationally recognized student-centric education must include a flourishing and immersive residential experience on the Oxford campus, early and proactive career exploration across all majors on all campuses, and the highest commitment to student health and wellness of all Miami students. We are working to identify the kind of community we will create together. A collaboration of faculty and staff led by Student Affairs is devising a plan to design and implement that vision. We are at a nexus now with residence life as we ask: what should a residential campus look like in the future? How will the residential campus help differentiate a Miami education by supporting and accelerating meaningful connections of students, faculty, and the community in ways that fulfill the aspirations of each individual and elevate the strength of the institution? As we look forward I am also charging ahead asking an even broader question about our first year experience – How do we integrate, coordinate and enhance the overall student experience in the first year.

A thriving campus community must be a healthy community. Take just one example of our commitment to the safety and well-being of our students: the health center will be transformed, with additional space and services, including alcohol screening for all visitors to the center. Student health oversight, formerly with the Dean of Students, will now be split off and led by a staff professional focused solely on the health and well-being of our students. We will structure our efforts as a collaborative, comprehensive health model moving forward. We will engage and fully utilize our vast faculty expertise to connect nationally and help inform our solutions for student health and safety.

CHANGE THE WORLD THROUGH MIAMI

Our disciplinary, transdisciplinary, and transformative research will offer solutions to the complex problems of the 21st century. This is not only in science, engineering, business, and economics, but also in social and political institutions, cultural understanding, and mutual respect. We are an exemplar of a diverse, inclusive, and united scholarly community that builds trust, conducts civil dialogue, and seeks solutions that benefit every individual and the community as a whole. We will equip our students through career services to apply what they have learned in the world, through internships, research experiences, and job placements, for their own success and for the benefit of society.

We draw confidence from our history of success at making an impact on the world. We were conducting transdisciplinary research to solve problems before “inter-, multi-, trans-disciplinary” became the buzzwords – 95 years ago, when the Scripps Gerontology Center was founded as the

Scripps Foundation for Research in Population Problems at Miami University. It's still thriving – it was named an Ohio Center of Excellence in 2011 – and it's been joined by others like the Institute for Entrepreneurship, which attracts students from about 100 different majors, and the Center for Structural Biology and Metabonomics. The Humanities Center and the Center for Analytics and Data Science bring together a host of disciplines to address vital issues across the academic spectrum. Don't let the names fool you – in the connected 21st century, CADS includes liberal arts, and humanities includes STEM.

Let me provide one example of a transdisciplinary approach. A team of five Miami faculty – Jennifer Blue of physics, Ellen Yeziarski of chemistry and biochemistry, and Nazan Bautista, Tammy Schwartz, and Jeff Wanko of teacher education – received over one million dollars from the National Science Foundation to support Miami's Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program that boosts the number of highly-qualified STEM teachers who serve in high-need schools.

We're making progress. Our transdisciplinary expertise is indispensable in the 21st century, when the world is so deeply connected and the problems are so vast and complex that no single discipline can address them alone. Our synergies empower our transdisciplinary pursuits with our 34 centers and institutes on campus. Moreover, our liberal arts foundation equips us with an instinct to take a broad view, consider a variety of possibilities, and conduct effective analysis and synthesis to reach answers and solutions.

In my view, the reports of the liberal arts' struggling are greatly exaggerated. In the face of Big Data, artificial intelligence, and scientific and technological breakthroughs, the need for the human dimension has become only more pressing. It's not enough, as Michael Crichton said, to consider only what we *can* do – we must consider what we *should* do, and the liberal arts provide the tools for that investigation. Our Miami Plan is foundational to educate our students in transdisciplinary approaches to problem solving.

The National Association of Colleges and Employers recently issued an updated list of the key competencies for career readiness, and it sounds a lot like “a liberal education grounded in the qualities of character and intellect”: critical thinking and responsible action, articulate ideas and collaborative relationships, data analysis and inclusiveness, problem-solving and empathy. In fact, the list of personal qualities is much longer than the list of cognitive skills, including ethics, integrity, interpersonal skills, developing others, self-advocacy, and respect for diversity. That is the Miami Experience.

We have bold aspirations and Big Ideas. We will provide solutions to many of the complex problems the world faces – and we will provide a model of community where learning and life can flourish.

Our teacher-scholar model has been foundational for Miami University – it is who we are and how we attack enduring questions and complex challenges. Our upcoming campaign will significantly invest in faculty and academic programs, both in disciplines where we excel and in transdisciplinary initiatives where we will continue to advance. These are a few of the transformative ideas embedded in and across our divisions – Global Engagement, Design & Innovation, Socially Engaged Engineering and Computing, Health Sciences, Entrepreneurship & Urban Renewal. These big ideas need funding,

and they will be a part of the campaign to enhance the university, provide resources for our faculty, and offer more opportunities for our students.

We will continue to grow research opportunities for both graduate and undergraduate students. Our undergraduates work side by side with our graduate students and are also creators of new knowledge. We will also expand our sponsored research efforts, our grant submissions to federal agencies, as well as to as foundation and corporate supporters. Soon we will hire a new corporate and foundations associate vice president to help extend our reach – assisting faculty and staff in all divisions with connections and identifying research opportunities. We will elevate our mechanism to move our scholarship and research discovery into the world for societal benefit – inventions, policies, educational strategies, and more.

On the student front, we will build out a new career exploration mechanism to provide students with maximum opportunities. Miami is already recognized for our incredibly high rate of placing our students in jobs and in top professional and graduate programs. With our expanded facility, we will innovate even more in career exploration, including more internship opportunities and more experiential learning. We have seen success at placing students earlier in internships, even between their sophomore and junior years, in smaller companies through our Altman Summer Scholar Internship Program, an innovative program to expose our students to start-up company environments. This complement to classroom learning will give our students an edge post-graduation in any career direction they choose to pursue.

On the subject of impacting the world and bringing visibility to Miami, I am delighted to announce that NPR's Science Friday is coming to Miami on April 21, 2018, and Ira Flatow will be with us. That means his 1.8 million listeners will be exposed to Miami University. More details to come.

To guarantee our future, we will, first of all, conduct the most aggressive campaign in Miami history. Our aspirations are bold, our ideas are big, our ambition is to lead. Such transformative thinking and leadership can be achieved only with the resources required to make it happen. We will focus on enhancing our academics, curriculum and research, faculty opportunities, integration between campus life and academics, career exploration, and improved facilities – we will focus on the academy. We will accelerate our inclusion of diverse and top-tier students and focus our efforts on need-based and merit-based scholarships. We will enhance our Miami Experience, including our residential arrangements, athletics, and community spirit. We just finished our most successful fundraising year ever, raising nearly \$100 million. That is the new normal.

Second, in addition to the campaign, we are building a strategic initiatives effort to invest significant, one-time resources in collaborative and far-reaching ideas to advance curriculum, programs, and scholarship. The goal is the same: to provide resources for our aspirations. We must start now to identify areas of focus for investment as we pursue funding through our campaign. I thank the provost and deans for their efforts, and I want to acknowledge our CFO, Dr. David Creamer, for his work in identifying resources to co-invest with our academic divisions. The provost, in collaboration with the deans, will define the process of selecting initiatives that are collaborative, cross-divisional, and likely to empower us to achieve our greatest aspirations.

Finally, 2020 is approaching – that means our 2020 strategic plan is nearing its end. We have enjoyed great success on all fronts. Building out a new strategic plan takes time, so we will start planning for the next phase of Miami’s future with broad participation and engagement. With the rapid pace of technology and the accelerated world we live in, the plan will be visionary – but it must also be dynamic and flexible. We must ensure that our financial models are robust to support our future aspirations.

We need to track our progress, and if the world changes, we must adapt.

In my short time at Miami, I have seen passion. Compassion. Bold thinking. Lofty aspirations. Creative solutions. Collaboration. Unity. We are equipped to achieve our vision of a future for Miami that builds on our strong foundation of character and intellect, stays rooted in our rich liberal arts tradition and student-centered mission, and elevates the teacher-scholar model. I am calling on all of us to think big, to bring forward visionary ideas, to embrace the future. Creativity, imagination, and innovation will empower everything we do. We all have a role to play in achieving these goals, both now and in the future. We will establish the best conditions for our students, our faculty, and our staff so that we can continue to be agents of change, intellectuals, and problem solvers, sustaining our optimistic vision of a bright future.

I feel fortunate to be here at Miami – I know it is a gift. I resonate deeply with the mission, Love and Honor, the aspirations of the students, faculty, staff, and loyal alumni, and the overarching philosophy of a student-centered university.

Today, I stand before you enthusiastic about our future. We will seize the opportunities ahead of us and face the challenges head-on, with the courage to think and act boldly. With the optimism to know we can advance. With the imagination to impact others’ futures. With the vision to transcend the status quo. With an unrelenting sense of purpose. With the empathy to ensure that progress uplifts everyone. With a dedication to meaningful connections.

All of you inspire me to be my best. The presidency of Miami carries great responsibilities, and I am grateful to know that I am part of a strong and passionate community. Together, we will take Miami University to new heights, and more generations will say: “To think that in such a place I led such a life.”

I leave you with this micro-poem, or Twitter poetry, from a contest run by Professor of English Cathy Wagner in the spring. There were more than 100 poems submitted on the theme of Love and Honor. Everyone has their favorite poem; here is one of mine, from Cole Hankins, Class of 2019:

*“We see it in red brick buildings,
in the cupolas come Fall:
Miami is not mine or yours,
we see that Miami is for all.”*

Yes, Miami is for us all, and I call upon all of us to
Connect the world to Miami;

**Build the community at Miami; and
Change the world through Miami.**

As the Myaamia language puts it: *Kiiloonaa Myaamiaki* – “We are Miami.”

Love and Honor!