

Miami University Annual Address

October 4, 2018

President Gregory P. Crawford

Good afternoon, and welcome students, faculty, staff and alumni – and valued stakeholders and partners. We are delighted to have you with us today either here on our Miami University campus in Oxford, on our regional campuses, or around the world in cyberspace. Love and Honor to all.

Let me begin with some personal reflections. Renate and I have been at Miami now for two years. We love everything about Miami – the student-centered mission, the teacher-scholar model, the community of Love and Honor. I am grateful to lead this institution and humbled by the responsibility of advancing such a remarkable legacy.

Today, I want to talk about purpose - advancing Miami's purpose in today's world. Honoring our past with its legacy and traditions, and assessing our present with its successes and challenges. Imagining our future with a vision and optimism that will advance our vital mission and purpose.

We stand today in a remarkable place at a remarkable time. The world is changing every day – every minute. We are creating new careers and new communities. A decade ago, who would have imagined the need for a social media director, or a data scientist, or a chief innovation officer? For current middle school students, two-thirds of the jobs they will fill upon graduation do not exist today.

For Miami University, we have the opportunity to innovate and advance in this world – and thanks to the wise strategic decisions of the last decade, we start from a position of strength. Now, we can envision our future clearly, and make it a reality.

My vision of Miami’s future – our vision of Miami’s future – must be crystal clear:

An academic community where students and faculty break through boundaries and transcend disciplines to solve big problems. Students live and study in a vibrant, engaged and intellectually connected community, able to realize their highest ambitions. Faculty meet the challenge with new scholarship and research that opens doors to a limitless future we cannot even imagine today. Our staff is motivated and inspired by Miami’s mission, and supported by the entire Miami community.

I am confident we can create this vision together. We know how we will get there. We will continue to invest in our core strengths of liberal arts excellence and an unparalleled student experience. We look forward to a future of creativity and innovation to prepare our students for a lifetime of leadership and service. We will teach and learn across departmental and divisional boundaries, because that is what the moment demands.

We stand in this remarkable place today because of the dedicated pioneers of two centuries ago – who knew that education was the path to success for the children of farmers on the frontier. Miami President Robert Hamilton Bishop said in 1829 that knowledge is NOT exclusive, but “is to become the common property of the mass of the human family.” This is our legacy.

From the beginning, our vision has been to make education the common property of all – to serve the community. In my own career, I have served at fine academic institutions of every sort. I have worked with amazing faculty and students - but Miami is truly special.

Undergraduates work shoulder-to-shoulder with faculty and graduate students to create new knowledge and to answer enduring questions. They journey abroad to experience diverse

cultures and make the unfamiliar familiar. They dedicate themselves to service-learning and leadership for the sake of others. They do not merely absorb knowledge and earn credits. They create knowledge and learn with purpose – driven by our mission and embodying our core values. Everything we do stands on that sturdy foundation.

I cannot convey how grateful I am for the dedicated faculty, the committed staff, the loyal alumni and the passionate students at Miami. In our Code of Love and Honor, we say, “I am Miami.” Miami is what it is because of such dedicated and talented people who live our values day in and day out – pursuing excellence on our campuses and beyond. Thank you to the entire Miami family for all that you do – every day.

I’d like to take a minute to celebrate a successful year – to assess our present. We made great progress toward our strategic goals and advanced Miami on the national and world stage. Here are a few highlights:

Once again, we are ranked among the top universities in the country by US News & World Report for our commitment to undergraduate teaching – a commitment central to our identity and purpose.

In March, more than 100 of us – including about 80 students – visited Washington, D.C. We honored Congressman and iconic civil rights leader John Lewis with our inaugural Freedom Summer of ’64 Award. Congressman Lewis was part of that summer at Western College for Women, now our Western Campus, where 800 volunteers were trained to register black voters in the segregated South. “Students have always played a major role,” Lewis told us. “Without students being involved, the civil rights movement wouldn’t have succeeded ...”

Last year, our faculty and staff won \$24 million in research funding, the most in a decade and one-third more than the year before. More than 2,000 Miami students conducted groundbreaking research with our faculty. This scholarship last year produced hundreds of

creative performances, faculty recognitions, books, research papers, and patents. Here are just a few examples:

Musicology Professor Tammy Kernodle, our Benjamin Harrison Medallion winner, was elected President of the Society for American Music.

History Professor Amanda McVety published her new treatise, on vaccines and global development in the 20th century, at one of the top presses in the world, Cambridge University.

Assistant professor Michelle Buchberger at Miami Regionals published a chapter in a new book on British fiction in the 1960s, focusing on novelist John Fowles.

Chemistry & Biochemistry Professor Gary Lorigan received nearly \$3 million in grant funding from the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation. He studies the structures of membrane protein channels that are directly related to heart disease.

Last year, more than 280 undergraduates from 10 departments were published in peer-reviewed publications. Four of those undergraduates, mentored by engineering professors Jessica Sparks and Dominic Konkolewicz, were published in the prestigious ACS Macro Letters for their interdisciplinary work focused on polymer networks.

Economics professor Melissa Thomasson testified on Capitol Hill about the evolution of the health insurance market in the United States and its effect on health care costs.

Ashley Johnson, clinical faculty in inclusive special education, has pioneered the Inclusive University program that invites college students to co-learn alongside local participants with intellectual disabilities.

Instructor at Miami Regionals, Sarah Woiteshek's students presented their final project to the Diversity and Inclusion Commission from the city of Hamilton – practicing the power of storytelling in advocacy work.

Annabelle Arbogast, a doctoral candidate in social gerontology, won last year's Graduate Student Achievement Award after presenting six papers and co-facilitating two conference workshops during the past two years.

Jason Shaiman, curator of exhibitions at the Miami Art Museum, organized “Telling a People's Story: African-American Children's Illustrated Literature” – highlighting authors and illustrators of children's books that focused on civil rights – and providing a broad view of the African-American community that is seldom seen or explored.

Professor Rodney Coates and the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force engaged with the Miami community and produced several recommendations to improve inclusion on our campuses – including a training module for new students, faculty and staff that we are implementing this fall.

Miami started collaborating with the Wright Brothers Institute to develop ideas from the U.S. Air Force Research Laboratory's publicly-available patent portfolio. Our undergraduate capstone students in instructor Wayne Speer's class in the Institute for Entrepreneurship studied nearly 1,000 patents and narrowed and segmented the portfolio. Students will validate technologies, build prototypes, and develop plans for new applications.

Our Institute for Entrepreneurship remains one of the best in the country with nearly 50 co-majors and 95 minors, touching more than 100 majors across Miami. One of our programs that provides undergraduates an incredible experience is the Altman Internship Program, where students are funded to work at a start-up company during the summer.

Our students are working in record numbers in AIMS San Francisco, experiencing the rapid pace of change at the global epicenter of innovation.

Our MIAMI Women organization launched Hawk Tank, modeled after the blockbuster show “Shark Tank.” Innovators pitched their ideas involving issues and solutions related to women, and earned more than \$100,000 in grants.

The Howe Center for Writing Excellence surpassed several milestones, breaking through boundaries to establish writing as a distinctive part of a Miami education. Since 2007, the Howe Writing Center surpassed 42,000 student visits.

Our students never cease to amaze me:

Miami won the national championship in Mock Trial – defeating Yale University – and also won the national championship in varsity E-sports.

The Tri-Delt sorority hosted its annual “Delta House of Pancakes” fundraiser, with proceeds benefiting St. Jude’s Children’s Research Hospital – helping children with life-threatening diseases to heal and thrive – one of many philanthropic activities of our Greek community.

Sara Al-Zubi became Miami’s first Truman Scholar in 15 years – after turning her passion for helping refugees into the founding of several non-profits.

Megan Zahneis interned at the Chronicle of Higher Education this summer, and has worked at The Miami Student. Megan is now published in the nation’s pre-eminent higher education trade journal.

Katie Tomasic – a volleyball standout, a MAC champion, and an Academic All-American with a perfect 4.0 majoring in finance – now working at Eli Lilly.

Marketing major Britt Casey won his first professional race at Daytona Motor Speedway and followed that with a “RedHawks shoutout” live on Fox Sports television!

In addition to all of the individual accomplishments of Miamians, we launched several initiatives to move the institution forward.

We launched a new model for career exploration and success. Already, more than 95% of Miami graduates get jobs or enroll in graduate or professional programs within six months of graduation. Starting with this year’s incoming class, we are engaging students from their first weeks on campus to discuss their career aspirations. They will have opportunities for multiple internships and job shadowing before they graduate. This will differentiate Miami students.

Our comprehensive campaign is well underway – more than \$280 million so far. The last two years have been the most successful in Miami history. Our drive focuses on scholarships – so we can attract the best students in the country and lower the financial barriers to a Miami education. David Dafoe, Miami Class of 1984, pledged more than \$30 million for scholarships to ensure that future Miamians have the same opportunities he had.

Last spring, we announced an audacious new investment into academics – called Boldly Creative. This \$50 million fund, directing resources to big-impact academics, will unleash creativity and innovation to equip our students with the skills they need. Earlier this week, we received 36 Boldly Creative pre-proposals from faculty teams – and we already are planning investments in key areas such as health care, advanced data and analytics, and post-graduate education.

The Miami RedHawks have much to celebrate. The sheer athleticism and grit of our teams and MAC championships in women’s Volleyball and Field Hockey. We received the Carol Cartwright Award from the Mid-American Conference for excellence in academics, athletics,

and citizenship. This is a big deal – a testament to the talent, intellect and leadership of our student-athletes.

What a year! And that’s just a sample of the countless expressions of our mission, our values, and our purpose at Miami. Thank you students, faculty, staff and alumni – you inspire me every day. Now you see why I am so enthusiastic about our future and so grateful to be your colleague.

This fall, we opened our academic year in August with an extraordinary celebration of our largest and most diverse incoming class ever. At our convocation, we welcomed back Wil Haygood, Class of ’76, to debut his new book *Tigerland* as our first-year read. Wil writes with purpose – telling the stories of African-Americans who have made significant contributions to our society. Thank you Professors John Jeep and Monica Schneider for your leadership in connecting our first-year students with this story. Let me share with you some highlights from that magical day.

[\(Video plays.\)](#)

What a wonderful event and a powerful message.

Now it’s time for us to rise to meet the challenges of our day. There is no doubt that our future will be different from our past – more innovation; more technology; more data; more competition; more diversity of people, thought, ideas; and accelerating change. We have made smart decisions during the past decade, enabling us to confront our future from a position of strength. Yet we ALL know that we cannot stand still. Now we face the question – How should we plan for what’s ahead?

In 2013, we adopted “Miami 2020,” a strategic plan to advance the mission and purpose in the early years of the 21st century. We set ambitious goals – more partnerships, advanced retention

rates, enhanced diversity, more multiple majors, more study abroad. Together, we have accomplished all of those goals. We are a stronger university, more connected than ever, and well positioned for the future. A remarkable two years ahead of schedule, we have accomplished much to make us proud. Congratulations to all Miamians for these successes.

But sustaining our success and fulfilling our purpose will be more challenging in the years ahead. Universities are scrutinized on many fronts, with public perceptions of soaring costs and failure to innovate. From my position inside the academy, I will say that some of the fault-finding is fair – we can do much better. And I will say without reservation – continuing the status quo will not succeed in the future. We must change – going beyond incrementalism and caution. We must embrace innovation, adapting to a dynamic world where exponential change is driven by accelerating technology and connectivity.

Why must we change now? The landscape surrounding all universities provides the answers. It breeds volatility and competition – declining numbers of high school graduates; reduction of state subsidy; concerns about the affordability and value of a college degree; significant tuition discounting; the expansion of online learning opportunities; and a perception among some employers that graduates are not prepared for today’s workforce. Many institutions are facing significant financial pressures – responding by cutting longstanding programs, consolidating, and some closing their doors.

Some of the best universities in the country have responded with innovation – new programs, transdisciplinary academics, honors programs with enticing scholarship offers, and new buildings on campus to enhance collaboration. Our specific opportunity is to find the right path for Miami.

Many students and families view higher education through a different lens than in previous generations – as a vehicle to advance their career and improve their lives. The world has changed – and the marketplace calls for global citizens with a diverse portfolio of skills. We

have to change as well. We will make strategic choices about our own priorities. All academic programs cannot grow. Students are signaling priorities with their enrollment and we must adapt with them. The good news is – we have the talent, vision and expertise on our campuses to make those choices and thrive. We have done it before. As we plan for this dynamic world, we will do it again.

This year, to respond to those circumstances, to build on the success of Miami 2020, and to advance our purpose as an institution, we will develop a new strategic direction. We will imagine and invent a new future together. It must be bold. It must be creative. It must be transformative. This is how Miami University will evolve and flourish in THIS fast-moving environment. Our new plan will not be chiseled in stone – change comes too fast. It will be flexible, agile, and responsive to new opportunities and challenges with one goal in mind – to fulfill the purpose that has distinguished this great university for generations, and renew our fundamental commitments to each other.

We have designed a thoughtful process that we will launch this fall. Our Strategic Planning Steering Committee will be co-chaired by Professor Julia Guichard and Professor Bob Applebaum – and include representation from across our campuses. Subcommittees focusing on six priorities will address:

- Academic Excellence
- Research and Scholarly Success
- Transformational Student Experience
- Diversity, Inclusion, and Community
- Financial and Resource Sustainability
- And Miami as a National University.

I am looking forward to accomplishing these bold initiatives with you – leading Miami University to a prosperous and sustainable future as the nation’s premier student-centered university. Here are four principles underlying the strategic planning work:

First – It’s time to invest in academics.

Students choose a university for many reasons. One consideration is infrastructure quality – updated classrooms and residence halls, and inviting gathering spaces for students. During the last decade, we have invested heavily in this sort of infrastructure – more than \$500 million in all. You can see the results all over our campuses, from the Armstrong Student Center to renovated residence halls to the newly opened Pearson Hall. Other reasons for choosing a college include finances and career services – can you afford college, and can you find the right job after graduation?

But the number one reason students choose a particular university is clear – ACADEMICS. Students come to Miami for an intellectual experience. They know that excellence in academics sets them up for future success. That is why our next plan will focus on academics first and foremost. We will create an academic life here that will be irresistible.

Second – Our commitment to the liberal arts must be stronger than ever.

If ever there was a time to concentrate on the liberal arts, it is now. The challenges of our time are so large and complex that no single discipline can equip students to solve them. The liberal arts play a central role as students learn to think broadly and critically, engage diverse and contrary views with respect, conduct evidence-based analysis, and master the power of spoken and written language. We have enshrined those values through the Global Miami Plan, which translates discovery to real-world impact. These commitments have never wavered at Miami – and they never will.

Third – We must look outward.

We must aggressively engage with all stakeholders – government, industry, non-profits, the entrepreneurial ecosystem, other universities, and most of all our own alumni network. These

connections will ensure that our students will be engaged beyond the classroom – graduates ready to lead with a global mindset, and prepared for their careers and civic lives.

Fourth – We must cultivate a spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Evolving means carrying forward our strengths and traditions while adopting bold changes that strengthen Miami. Change requires thoughtful reflection, creative imagination, and inquisitive innovation. Innovation requires openness to new ideas – inclusion of diverse views – courage to persevere – confidence to think and act boldly – and unity to uphold the common good and purpose of this university. Entrepreneurship is about a lot more than starting companies. It is a mindset, one we will cultivate and embrace.

To achieve our purpose as an educational institution, and keeping these principles in mind, Miami’s new strategic plan will include six distinct focus areas:

Academic Excellence

Let’s talk about academic excellence. Miami’s reputation is founded on engaged learning, strong student interactions with faculty; and an acclaimed liberal-arts experience for all students regardless of major. Our liberal-arts tradition sets the foundation for trans-disciplinary excellence, leadership, and civic responsibility. Walk around campus, and you’ll find many examples of boundary-breaking leadership: The Humanities Center, the Howe Center for Writing Excellence, the Institute for Environmental Sustainability, Scripps Gerontology Center, the Institute for Entrepreneurship, the Armstrong Institute for Interactive Media Studies, and the Center for Analytics & Data Science – among many other examples.

The future will require even more collaboration across disciplines. The grand global challenges are just too complex for any one discipline to solve. Our student training and education must

become more intentionally connected – with a common purpose and even common space where people of diverse expertise can meet for deliberate pursuits and serendipitous discovery. Using discovery to solve problems inevitably requires expertise in areas of study that are intensely human – ethics, collaboration, creativity and ingenuity.

As the workforce becomes more globalized and fluid, Miami will need to develop more advanced education beyond the bachelor’s degree. More adults are seeking advanced education to train, re-train and re-tool their skills than ever before.

Across the next decade, master's degrees are expected to grow far faster than any others – within five years, they will account for nearly one-third of all degrees awarded. Students seek such degrees to complement their undergraduate background with a specialty, or to enhance their career opportunities. Miami must move where the demand is moving – building on our undergraduate excellence by creating post-graduate degrees, certificates, and stackable credentials that advance careers. We can BOTH elevate our presence in this space while enhancing our student-centered undergraduate education.

We will build out premier programs to attract the best and brightest students. This year, we have launched the Presidential Fellows program, a signature full-scholarship opportunity for high-ability high school graduates. We must establish one of the premier programs in the country – where top students can conduct research – design their own career path – choose international study and internships – and engage in impactful public service. We want those students here at Miami.

Research and Scholarly Success

Linked to the success of our academic programs is excellence in research and scholarship. At Miami, undergraduate research is the norm and expectation. We must continue to increase our

external funding and partnerships. We will advance our teacher/scholar model by building the necessary infrastructure and organizations that make our faculty, staff and students sought-after partners for significant research initiatives.

Transformational Student Experience

Miami has achieved national acclaim for cultivating student success – with an unparalleled “Miami Experience” that is part of our core. Students don’t live in silos, and neither can we. We will position our residence halls and programs to integrate life and learning with our students’ academic experiences – connections with faculty, advisors, counselors, and career exploration staff - where students live. We will continue to provide experiential learning opportunities. Examples of these experiences include writing for The Miami Student, advocating for students through Associated Student Government, managing the First Miami Student Credit Union – to name a few. Meaningful, transformative opportunities such as these are at the heart of the Miami Experience.

Our Healthy Miami Collaborative will nurture our students’ holistic health, from fitness and mental health to our response to challenges such as alcohol and sexual and interpersonal violence. These are very real issues for our students. We stand with all Miamians working to make our campuses more safe and secure.

Diversity, Inclusion & Community

Diversity and inclusion is integral to our academic mission and purpose – this education is grounded in both character and intellect, within a community that welcomes diverse people, respects diverse ideas, and empowers all Miamians to achieve their full potential.

We have diversified our student body, faculty and staff. To continue our momentum, we must develop more strategies to implement our commitment to inclusive excellence – informed by efforts including the One Miami Campus Climate survey. Academic excellence and diversity grow and thrive together.

Financial & Resource Sustainability

Like universities all over the country, we face a stark reality – we need additional resources to fulfill our academic mission and provide the Miami Experience that has distinguished us for generations. We are dependent on tuition – but we cannot rely on the tuition increases of the past. And, while the financial landscape is challenging, we will not let it change what makes us distinct. We must not sacrifice the personal attention, meaningful classroom interactions, and close faculty relationships that define Miami University. We must continue to design proactive, market-appropriate academic and financial blueprints that empower the university to plan strategically, allocate resources prudently, manage government regulations, and mitigate risk.

We will need to make choices – and sometimes difficult decisions – regarding how and where to invest our resources. We will foster a culture that embraces sustainability in a long-term financial model, and we will work to understand- and most likely modify - the Responsibility Centered Management Model (RCM) to ensure that we incentivize cross-disciplinary collaboration and innovation.

Collaboration means more than joining with another unit for a new course of study. It means working together to confront our institutional challenges and those facing all of higher education. The good news is that, unlike many other institutions, we face these challenges from a position of historic and financial strength – but we must start now.

In order to accomplish our grand vision emerging from the strategic plan, we must align our resources – Boldly Creative, campaign, infrastructure investments, division and unit investment – all to focus on our top institutional priorities for maximum impact.

Miami As a National University

Our goal is to achieve our academic purpose as a sought-after institution for top students and faculty – burnishing our identity, built over two centuries, as a national university. Our foundation of teaching, research and service has earned us acclaim as an Original Public Ivy. Our innovative strategic plan will position Miami University to redefine higher education. Miamians should be confident that Miami is recognized worldwide for our excellence, and that this great university will flourish long into the future.

In closing, let me return to where I began today – we had an exceptional year and continue to fulfill our purpose and mission. We are once again ranked as a top university nationally for undergraduate teaching, engineering, entrepreneurship and other strengths. People often ask me – “What are your peer universities?” It’s a difficult question to answer, because Miami is so distinctive. We are a large public university with significant resources, yet in many ways Miami feels like a small residential college. That is our “special sauce” – a quality we will nurture and honor.

So what will change? What new things will come to mind in the future when people think of Miami University? We begin to envision that future today.

Our strategic direction will focus on academics, while elevating our strengths. We will attract the best minds – students, faculty and staff – from diverse backgrounds. We will incorporate them into an innovative community with a great heart for leadership, service and success. We

will provide the intellectual prowess, the entrepreneurial mindset, the freedom of thought and discovery, and the physical facilities that generate connection and collaboration.

We will seek and discover answers to enduring questions and solutions to national and global challenges. We will create evidence-based, data-informed value. In partnership with others who share our vision, we will advance change for the benefit of individuals and society. As an institution and as individuals, we will be known for our creativity, our service, our global leadership, and our purpose.

It is going to be a great year as we plan for the future together. Think big. Act boldly. Design with the future in mind. Unite our Miami family's unbounded energy to transform our university and our world.

Earlier, I said without reservation that the status quo will not succeed in the future. I will also say this without reservation: At this inflection point, Miami University is well-positioned to create our own thriving future. Our purpose is eternal, our tradition is unshakeable, and our people share a commitment to excellence.

Love and Honor!