

Inaugural Address

November 09, 2010

Thank you Chancellor Kirwan.

Distinguished guests, colleagues, friends: Each and every one of you honors our University and me by your presence here today.

Thank you Senator Frank Kelly for presiding, Dr. Paul Bachner for your beautiful music, and Dr. Mel Grumbach for your gracious introduction. To all who spoke, to the platform party, my fellow faculty, staff, and students at the University of Maryland and my colleagues in the University of Maryland Medical System, your warm welcome home to Maryland has humbled me. I am deeply honored by our public leaders and elected officials who have come here today to reinforce their unwavering support of our University and me personally.

I thank the presidential search committee chaired by Mr. Richard Berndt and especially the Regents of the University System of Maryland, chaired by Mr. Clifford Kendall, and its distinguished Chancellor, Dr. Brit Kirwan, for giving me the opportunity to be the sixth president of the University of Maryland Baltimore. I am immeasurably grateful for my friends and colleagues who have enabled my career across the years and shaped me into someone considered worthy of this position.

And of course a special thanks to Andrea, my lovely wife of 41 years - to our four children, Corey, Marissa, Chad, and Saranne, their significant others, Kimberly, Ben, Shana, and Ben, and my two grandchildren, Cole and Zachary. I love you all more than words can say. I am blessed to have such a wonderful and supportive family who has encouraged and sustained me every step of the way on this career journey. And I know, children, that you have all considered Maryland your home no matter where our respective careers have taken us. Maryland and the city of Baltimore have shaped who we are; I am privileged to find my way back to serve this community which was so formative and nourishing to our family.

I don't mind sharing with you - and I share it unabashedly - a bit of my beginnings, for there are lessons to be drawn. I am a first-generation American, the only child of immigrant parents who struggled to make a living, my father in a hand laundry and my mother as a seamstress. Their goal: to make opportunities for me. I knew it then, and I know it now.

But as I approached college and medical school, my mother - by then a widow - had no resources. I was fortunate. I received my undergraduate education at Northwestern University on scholarship. I was then accepted at Northwestern's medical school but without a means to pay - until one day a few weeks before I was due to matriculate, I received a letter informing me that I had been named the Ploner Scholar - giving me full financial support for four years of medical school education. To my parents, to a university who believed in me, and to Mrs. Louise Ploner - whom I never had the privilege to meet - thank you for your lessons of sacrifice and responsibility, and for your gifts - gifts which enable me to stand here as the new leader of a distinguished institution. No one, I assure you, understands more than me the opportunity afforded our youth by the promise of a higher education.

How do I choose to lead? I choose to lead by championing collaboration. I consider it most symbolic that I am addressing you from the stage of the historic Hippodrome Theatre adjacent to our campus.

This magnificently renovated building, donated by our University and restored to the glory of almost a century ago when it opened as a vaudeville theatre, is a symbol of what coming together can do. Its renewed luster resulted with the support of a coalition of determined partners from the business community, foundations, government and our University. It is a linchpin of collective ambitions to which the University is fully committed to revitalize Baltimore's West side. And just look at what was accomplished!

My friends, consider this: we have really been measured since we were small children on our ability to collaborate. Remember in kindergarten - or for those of us who think kindergarten was too long ago to remember... remember when your children were in kindergarten... do you recall the little box on the report card that was checked with an S or a U for "playing well with others?"

The author Robert Fulghum captured the lessons of collaboration in his 1988 book entitled "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten." Recall his admonishment: "...it is still true, no matter how old you are, when you go out into the world it is best to hold hands and stick together."

I urge you to realize the importance of a "Satisfactory" score in today's university setting. I urge you to realize how

important it is for us “to play well with others” or in adult terms – to reject silos, selfishness, and purely personal agendas in favor of strong partnerships – among our faculty and staff, across the schools of our university, with our medical system partners, among the universities of our system, with our wider community and with entities across the globe.

I celebrate our University’s many examples of existing collaborations both within and beyond our campus. I am particularly inspired by all those who promote the needed interfaces between scholarly work and real-world problems. We have surgeons who invite basic scientists to the operating rooms to seek shared solutions to disease and dysfunction; institutes and laboratories where the impact of discoveries at the molecular level are further advanced by our legal and social scholars; and educational programs like our MD/PhD and MD/MPH tracks which prepare a future workforce to blend scientific knowledge and clinical acumen in addressing the diseases and social ills which perplex us.

And so many of our bridges between science and practice occur in a clinical venue which itself has become in the last several years an extraordinary model of highly effective collaboration. I refer to the symbiotic relationship between our University of Maryland School of Medicine and the University of Maryland Medical System.

Furthermore, our University of Maryland BioPark becomes a crucible for taking our discoveries and preparing them for the bedside, the office, and the world. All whose hard work has brought us to this level of highly collaborative efforts have our thanks. You are leaders.

But now we must take this University writ large, and build a platform for even broader collaborative endeavors. For example, I am committed to bringing our scientists, our social and legal scholars, our practitioners, and our health system together as never before in a “War against Childhood Obesity.” Apart from being a Universitywide attack against our number one public health problem, I intend this as a model for drawing investigators, clinicians, and our public policy makers together to confront the most challenging of societal issues. Preventing obesity in children is a starting point; what additional problems can we approach in this overarching, collaborative way?

Similarly, we must come together to educate our students: we must be pre-eminent in interprofessional education. The challenges of manpower shortages and the costs of healthcare can best be met by delivering care as well-organized teams of professionals. Payment reform for healthcare services may well require our future professionals to work in teams. Our future providers must recognize while they are students the expertise of disparate professionals, what they bring to the healthcare “table,” and how to get the best from each other on behalf of patients and populations. We are so well positioned in this University to educate teams.

I am happy to say that we are already well on our way in this regard both on this campus and at the System’s Shady Grove campus in Montgomery County. In fact, we envision working with colleagues there to create a regional health science campus which will be a model of interprofessionalism.

And Shady Grove is emblematic of our many other opportunities with sister institutions in the University System of Maryland - in the life sciences, engineering, law, and business. We must reach out to each other and fulfill the opportunities that have been given us by our System leaders to create new knowledge and improve the human condition through collaboration. Consider these new relationships: IBBR – The Institute for Biotechnology and Bioscience Research at Shady Grove, which is a partnership of our University and University of Maryland College Park; IMET - the Institute for Marine Environmental Technology housed at the Columbus Center here in Baltimore which represents our partnership with University of Maryland Baltimore County and University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science - and BioMET - Bioscience and Biomedical Engineering and Technology where we collaborate with our engineering colleagues at College Park. These formal entities complement existing and developing intercampus programs between our Law, Pharmacy, and Dental Schools and College Park. We take special pride as well in the highly successful Intercampus Biochemistry Program shared by UMBC and ourselves which prepares graduate students for scientific careers.

I highly value the strong relationships I am forming with my fellow Presidents in our System, - and especially welcome Wallace Loh who is newly arrived to lead the USM flagship campus at College Park.

And, beyond our University of Maryland here in Baltimore, the state and the region are blessed by the presence of extraordinary institutions. We must facilitate inter-university dialogue through organizations like the Maryland Campus Compact in the interest of bettering the region through the collective power of collaborating institutions.

I mentioned our University of Maryland BioPark earlier in the context of bringing our science to a needy world. But the BioPark transcends science and health as a symbol of leadership by collaboration.

With the vision of my predecessor, Dr. David Ramsay, the BioPark stands as a shining example of University, government and private collaboration. This is a place where jobs are created and school children are prepared for careers that will contribute to the diversity and inclusion which we must have in the healthcare workforce of the future - all of this happening on city blocks which not so very long ago were home to distressed housing for the

poor, empty lots, and too many broken dreams. We took the opportunity to cross Martin Luther King Blvd which for so long stood as the boundary which separated us from our neighbors to the west. Some irony - a street named for a man who said that "we go farther faster when we go together." We are fully committed, as demonstrated in our highly functioning community engagement programs spearheaded by our Social Work and Nursing Schools, to our neighbors in West Baltimore. It is not just their community - it is our collective community. In collaboration with our neighbors some of whom are with us today from the Poppleton neighborhood, the Hollins-Round House Association and beyond, we have literally crossed over the road to the other side. I borrow from my former leader, University of Kentucky President Dr. Lee Todd, Jr. in his inauguration speech. I hope you don't mind me sharing this Lee . . . "We must be a University that is internationally respected and locally loved."

I commit to all of you that we will do everything we can to deserve to be locally loved in the neighborhoods of Baltimore.

But, as well, we will through collaboration grow our international commitment and respect. The efforts of each of our schools in the University - and our Institute for Human Virology, our Center for Vaccine Development and our Medical System make a difference every day to people across the world. We will enhance our educational, research, and service endeavors by creating a University-wide infrastructure which will facilitate these efforts.

And our international collaborations, the educational experiences they provide our learners, and the new knowledge created will in turn strengthen our national security through the goodwill these activities generate. Moreover, they will inform and benefit what we do at home - in Baltimore, in Maryland, and in this nation.

What will it take to achieve this grander vision of collaboration? What are the challenges? Why is it so hard? Please do not mistake my message here in championing opportunities to work together. I don't seek vanilla. I don't advocate the death of rugged individualism and entrepreneurship. We should not stifle belief in one's uniqueness among like entities - nor a passion to be the best - even the best among equals. I don't argue for a university without distinct schools, a system without distinct universities, a health care system without distinct professions. If we do that, we will surely sink together into mediocrity rather than rising collectively to excellence. We should not, and cannot, ignore meaningful, real cultural differences as people, as professions, as distinct institutions. In my view we should celebrate and leverage uniqueness.

But we must balance compelling reasons for preserving and excelling at what is the best among us as unique entities, with opportunities to reach across the proverbial aisle when the case is compelling to work together. What we must reject are silos maintained purely for the sake of hubris, of ego - whether individual or institutional. We need to spend much less time maneuvering to get the credit for ourselves, and much more time creating ways to share the credit when shared credit is due.

We need to de-emphasize often perverse incentives which give advantage to "I" instead of "we." At minimum, we must commit ourselves to measuring and rewarding productive collaborations as much as we reward success by traditional measures.

Let us continue to recognize the funded grant's principal investigator; the scientific paper's first or senior author; to which department or which school funding is credited; and who it is that attracted the gift - but let us also find meaningful ways to recognize collaboration, to recognize the partners who enable these successes. In this age when we worship rankings, dare we also ask ourselves the question "Who's Number 1 for collaboration?" Those who are brave enough - big enough - to share the credit - they are the enlightened leaders. We need to recall the words of President Harry Truman and Coach John Wooden, each of whom pointed out to us that it's amazing what people can do when no one cares who gets the credit!

Beyond shared recognition, we must sufficiently incentivize scientific and educational collaboration in material ways. Witness the University of Maryland Baltimore and College Park competitive research seed program intended to foster teams of investigators crossing disciplinary boundaries and campuses.

This two-year old program is intended to establish specific research foci and generate preliminary data, which will lead to research proposals to the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, and other federal funding agencies. Similarly, we need to meaningfully resource and enhance our support for robust, ethical relationships between our university scientists on the one hand, and business, industry and governmental agencies on the other.

Beyond financial incentives to support scientific collaboration, we look forward with great hope to the addition of critically needed research space on this campus. We need to design and assign this space in ways that, as with funding, will incentivize team-based research.

And, in education as well, we must incentivize collaborative, interprofessional teaching across our disciplines and our campuses.

More specifically, in preparing our students for a reformed health care delivery system, it seems to me that we need to spend much less time as distinct professions making the “I can do what you can do” argument which too often serves to encourage “circling the wagon” behavior and turf battles. Perhaps we could spend more time saying the following: “I recognize and admire your knowledge and skill set. Here’s what I do which may add value to what you do - perhaps we could consider coming together around it.” It seems to me that those who champion the collaborative approach to healthcare delivery - they are leaders.

Mind you: in bridge building, we may reduce but we will not abolish duplications and redundancies - across professions, schools and institutions. The missions of a school or broader institution may require programs which from a higher level are seen as duplicative.

I once was challenged as a medical school dean by the leader of a community hospital who could not understand why we were enhancing our cardiology programs at the University. Didn’t I know, he asked, that his hospital already had the premier cardiology program in the region? Whether his hospital did or didn’t was beside the point. I explained to him that a strong cardiology program within the University was integral to supporting many other University-based education, research, and clinical programs - that matters of proximity, availability, and culture precluded total avoidance of duplication.

In fact, achieving effective collaborative relationships requires that one recognize the importance of taking the “other guy’s or gal’s” position and aspirations into account. We need the ability to better listen - to listen with energy to the other person. Without doing this, partnership cannot be crafted, much less sustained.

As Malcolm Forbes put it, “People who matter are most aware that everyone else matters too.” Understanding what the other person needs out of a relationship and when necessary, “giving a little” - that too is leadership.

And it is certainly not weakness. Effective partnerships and relationships, are not for the weak. Highly functioning collaborations are for those with self-confidence.

At the same time, they are for those with humility - those who are arrogant will not craft successful relationships. Many of you know that I speak often of civility - of the importance of being nice. I insist that our University will be in its internal and external dealings a shining example of civility in a world badly in need of such models.

And I ask you to accept a linkage here: to the extent that we “carry ourselves” with utmost civility as an institution, to the same extent will we succeed and lead by collaboration.

Colleagues and friends: our university is a catalyst for social betterment and an economic engine for the State of Maryland. As the founding campus of the University System of Maryland, we must again be founders - we must again be the ones with the flashlight. We must take a leadership position in identifying and enabling new opportunities to work jointly. To all who would partner in the advancement of our city, our state, and beyond: I urge you to come confidently, come from a position of strength, bringing ideas that add value; come committed to advocate but also to listen; and be prepared to share the credit and the satisfaction that come from mutual accomplishment. I have unbridled optimism for what - together - we can achieve.

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