

Building on our Past, Transforming our Future

Inaugural Address of Chancellor Mark A. Mone

Friday, October 2, 2015

Good afternoon, once again, and welcome.

In light of the tragic events at Umpqua Community College in Oregon that we learned about late yesterday and the recent death of one of our students and her sister this week, I would like to deviate briefly from my planned script to honor the victims.

In the Oregon campus shooting, at least 10 lives were lost and another 7 people were injured.

Last night, we held a vigil on campus for Brittany Musumeci, 23, and her sister Alexis Musumeci, 24, from Oregon, Wisconsin, who were killed when a wrong-way driver slammed into them on Interstate 95 in Jupiter, Florida, while they were on vacation.

Brittany had just graduated from UW-Milwaukee with honors. She was an accomplished violinist.

In honor of Brittany, and the victims of the school shooting in Oregon, will you please join me by standing for a moment of silence?

Observe silence.....

Thank you.

I want you to know that UWM places the highest value on the people who study, teach, and work here, and the safety and well-being of our students is the most important responsibility that I and other university administrators have.

I'll now begin my inaugural address, titled, **Building on our Past, Transforming our Future**

President Cross, Regents, Senator Baldwin, Secretary Newson, Mayor Barrett, County Executive Abele, delegates, distinguished guests, students, faculty, staff, alumni, friends, WAICU colleagues and valued UW System institution representatives, thank you for attending today. All of you who have presented, performed, and attended honor us. Deserving great thanks for distances travelled include my family from Washington, Oregon, and Colorado, the Bergesons from Tennessee, and my doctoral advisor and mentor, Dr. Douglas Baker, from Illinois. Great appreciation to the steering committee, planning team, and wonderful marshals for organizing everything so well. And to my wife, Sara, son, Eric and daughter, Emily, thanks for your support and love ... and for putting up with me.

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How about a round of applause for our master of ceremonies, Gale Klappa? Beyond Gale earning his BA in Mass Communications in our College of Letters and Science, UWM bestowed upon Dr. Klappa an Honorary Doctor of Commercial Science degree for his continuing contributions to our community and university. He is an extraordinarily busy man who makes the time to help UWM continue its journey forward.

And, thank you, Professor Frankie Flood, for creating this exceptional medallion that so meaningfully represents all that we are.

What a wonderful day in which we celebrate the past, present, and future impact of this great institution that we call the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Let us take a moment to contemplate what UWM stands for and where we came from. Access. Research. Discovery. Innovation. And, of course, the basic principle of the Wisconsin Idea that the university should improve people's lives beyond the classroom. Charles Van Hise – the grandfather of the Wisconsin Idea – declared that he would “never be content until the beneficent influence of the university reaches every family in the state.” I feel the same way and would like to see a day when UWM impacts the lives of every family in Wisconsin.

Recognizing where we came from strengthens the resolve for where we are going. It is not widely known that UWM's roots are deeper than 1956 when UWM was officially created. Rather, our genesis was in 1885 when the State Normal School at Milwaukee held its first classes on Wells and Eighteenth streets.

Since then, UWM has faced three major turning points.

The first turning point came in 1922, when the Regents voted to discontinue college courses and instead focus only on the instruction of teachers, who were in great demand as the population continued to grow. To meet that need, the Milwaukee State Normal School began offering four-year education-related degrees and soon became the Wisconsin State Teacher's College.

The second turning point began in the 1940s, when millions of veterans came home and were entering or re-entering civilian careers. The demand for higher education was overwhelming and so the teacher's college was authorized to award more four-year bachelor degrees and, in 1951, became Wisconsin State College.

A merger with the Milwaukee Extension Center in 1956 marked the third turning point when the Regents officially sanctioned the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee as a doctoral research university.

There is a singularly important thread woven throughout our history: Each turning point came because the region and the state needed something more and we needed to transform. Evolution and revolution are continuous and the only constant is change. So, as UWM has met past needs, there is no doubt that we will change again. When needs have arisen, UWM has delivered.

As you've seen and heard today:

The impact of UWM is at the individual level, as we transform students' lives.

The impact of UWM is at organization and community levels through the roles our graduates play collectively.

The impact of UWM is at regional, state, national and international levels through our research, discovery, and global reach.

And yet, you sometimes still hear people say, "Gee, UWM is Milwaukee's best kept secret." I can assure you that those touched by UWM will tell you that we are NOT a secret. This is a university that has a great record of success with adapting and changing to serve the needs of the people of Wisconsin.

For example, the Milwaukee Public School System has been hit hard by tightened budgets that impacted the arts. In response, faculty from our **Peck School of the Arts** procured a grant to develop a program that creates an ecosystem of support for current and future arts educators.

Another example: Nearly 30 percent of worker injuries in the gas utility industry come from changing meters. Our **College of Engineering and Applied Science** faculty and graduate students collaboratively developed a wrench that is now in production with Kenosha's Snap-On Tools to prevent those painful, costly injuries.

Another: About 15 years ago pollution and bad press nearly shut down Bradford Beach. The culprit was assumed to be combined sewer overflows. Novel molecular finger-printing techniques from our **School of Freshwater Sciences** discovered the culprit turned out to be seagull excrement. That analysis was the genesis of more partnerships – with MMSD, Milwaukee County Parks, the Lake Express Ferry, and Miller Coors. Together, we solved the problem with storm water gardens and a pooch patrol for those seagulls. Today, a revitalized Bradford beach is one of the most popular on all of Lake Michigan.

I'd call this a success.

Another example. The closing of the Pabst Brewery left the neighborhood surrounding the abandoned complex vacant and struggling. UWM partnered with community leaders and the Zilber Family Foundation to establish the **Zilber School of Public Health** in one of Milwaukee's most economically challenged neighborhoods. The School – the only urban school of public health in the state – now serves as a hub for learning, research, and community engagement, while helping to revitalize the neighborhood.

These are not secrets. They are successes. They are all examples of how UWM met a need.

As a final exhibit, the Kauffman Foundation this year identified Wisconsin as last place nationally and Milwaukee as 39th out of 40 metro areas in new business start ups. In response, thanks to a

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generous \$10 million gift from Sheldon and Marianne Lubar and a match from UW System, we will construct a new entrepreneurship center and new campus welcome center. The goal of the Lubar Center for Entrepreneurship will be to develop and train student entrepreneurs from all disciplines across our campus and help spark net new job growth in the region, along with innovation and creativity in existing organizations.

We saw a need and are adapting and changing to meet it. This is success in the making and I can guarantee that it won't be a secret! Our doors are open to the people of Wisconsin and beyond. We are a place where metamorphosis, service and success take place every day.

You know, the ritual of this inauguration ceremony with all of its formality and pomp and circumstance might suggest that today is about an individual. It is not. It is about the will of the people to induce positive change. None of the life- and community-changing examples I just mentioned would have been possible without the energy and power of our people: Our students, faculty, staff, alumni, friends and partners. You comprise everything we do.

I've often said the diversity of our people is one of our greatest strengths. From the 1,100 veterans on our campus – more than any other college or university in a six-state region – to the more than one-third of our student body which is of color, to the nearly 40 percent of our undergraduates who are first generation college students, to our American Sign Language program, and to UWM being among the top 50 campuses in the nation for LGBT+ students: That is what I call a testimony to diversity. Our very composition has changed and we embraced those changes and are turning them into successes.

Our more than 163,000 living alumni have remarkable impact on organizations in our community, region and world. The majority live and work in Wisconsin – and they are a top choice of area companies and organizations that employ our graduates. Most area firms have more UWM Panthers on their workforce than from any other source of talent. Companies like Aurora Healthcare, Northwestern Mutual, Milwaukee Public Schools, Rockwell Automation and Robert W. Baird to name just a few.

These are the Panthers who become our esteemed alumni. People like Satya Nadella, the CEO of one of the largest companies in the world, Microsoft. Satya received his master's degree in computer science from UWM. Or Mai Shoua Xiong, a first-grade teacher at MPS's Academy of Accelerated Learning, who is a Wisconsin teacher of the year. Mai received her master's from our School of Education.

UWM has changed the lives of so many of our well-known leaders and those who fulfill important roles in our community – the accountants, the health care workers, the building and operations experts, librarians, the retail marketers, and social workers. The list goes on.

While many of us could cite statistics about the people of UWM for longer than you would care to listen, I'd like to share a few examples, the kind of stories I get to hear about every day. Stories of changed lives.

Last Friday I was visiting with Jim Ziemer. Jim received his BBA in Accounting from the Lubar School of Business and went on to earn his Executive MBA degree with us. Rising from a summer job as a shop floor employee at Harley-Davidson, Jim moved up in key finance roles, helped lead the buyout of the company from AMF and went on to help turnaround the last surviving American motorcycle manufacturing firm, and what greatness it has since achieved. And, you might have guessed, it was no accident that our Panther, Jim Ziemer, became the CEO and President along the way. So as Jim and I visited, he reflected on the influences in his life and he praised the discipline, teaching, and impact of Dr. Paul Fischer, our Jerry Leer Professor of Accounting. Now, fast forward only three days later when, on Monday, as I was in the Gasthaus watching the Packers with a group of current masters in professional accounting program students, including my son, Eric. Guess who came up as one of their key influences? Yes, Paul Fischer — the very same professor who taught Jim Ziemer and who continues teaching to this day. And, incidentally, Paul received his BBA in accounting here himself! Do I have a great job or what?

About two weeks ago, I had the opportunity to visit with Kathryn Henry, who sang so beautifully for us earlier today, before she performed the National Anthem at UWM night at Miller Park. She told me how she grew up in Sheboygan, mastered 18 different instruments and came to UWM wanting to study music and become a band leader. In Katie's first year, Tanya Kruse Ruck, assistant professor of voice and opera and director of our vocal program, illuminated for Katie the gift that she possessed, helped train her, and opened doors for her to become one of the greatest young voices nationally as recognized by her finalist placement in the Metropolitan Opera, and has been courted by leading music schools, including Julliard. Katie said that, "Dr. Kruse Ruck is a mentor and a second mom for me." Powerful words!

A final example of the transformative effects of our people comes from our History Department in the College of Letters and Sciences. Our alumna, Dr. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, was honored earlier this month by the White House with a National Humanities Medal for a career showcasing the African-American journey. Now a professor at Harvard University, she counts UWM history professor Nathan Miller among her "heroes" because of the impact he had on her early development as a scholar. She said, "I wrote a paper on African-American soldiers in the Civil War and I think I've written a good paper and I get a C-minus!" she said. "It was heartbreaking."

Evelyn often relays to her Harvard students how she was challenged at UWM by this experience to ask questions and to think critically, rather than simply offer a narration of events. Her words: "I always tell my students the best friend you can have is someone who gives you honest and constructive criticism, because they can only make you better." You'll notice a common theme by the way, that the further our alumni have climbed the 'professional ladder,' the more they used their liberal arts education.

So, what is it that I am saying? I hope that two things are clear, thus far: First, our faculty and staff truly change lives in profound ways. Second, we, too, have made significant transformations through three major turning points.

While it will not be easy, I believe that we are well positioned to face and successfully address today's challenges to create what is now our fourth turning point. I outline three key areas of emphasis:

First, we must realize the stark challenges facing higher education today – in Wisconsin and elsewhere. We are experiencing competitive pressures, technology shifts, demographic challenges, and a host of other constraints—and we don't really know what the future holds. These challenges are considerably different than those facing UWM in the past—more deeply rooted, comprehensive, and part of a national set of issues facing all of higher education. It is in this context that we have to draw upon both our history of transformation and the ingenuity, savviness, and scrappiness that are part of UWM's DNA.

Perhaps ironically, one of my primary research, teaching and consulting areas is organizational decline and turnaround. What we are experiencing in higher education today is, unfortunately, very similar to what many other organizations have experienced: Forces exist to which we must evolve or we will face even more serious threats of maladaptation. As Darwin was fond of saying, it's not the strongest or most intelligent who survive, but those who can adapt to their environment. It is true that in Wisconsin we have our own unique forces, but if we look aside or ahead, we can see that most if not all of higher education is facing similar issues.

Through the study and knowledge gained from others who have successfully transformed—and the key word is successfully—there are useful lessons for us in higher education. We must:

- Examine the current situation and ensure that it's fully understood. Denial and lack of awareness can hobble any organization.
- We must clearly communicate the process for revitalization.
- We must involve key stakeholders in possible paths and choices ahead.
- We must determine the priorities and take decisive action to achieve them.

In this context, we have had extensive campus communications sessions—campus wide and school and college level. We've come together in working groups. And, last week we launched a Chancellor's Task Force with the charge to proactively identify substantial efficiencies, organizational structure, and additional approaches that will enable UWM to be optimally positioned for 2020 and beyond.

Incidentally, we are not acting as if the forces are immutable. Indeed, not. We have had dozens and dozens of legislative visits this year, with many others planned. I have been working closely with UW System President Ray Cross and others in UWS to develop plans for a strong UWM. Many of you have been advocating through our alumni, foundation, faculty, staff, and friends groups in person, social media, websites, and beyond.

But just realizing the challenge is not enough. Our second area of emphasis must be to **MANAGE** our destiny through goals, long-range planning, clear actions, and assessment. We must use the knowledge resources we have to establish our own best practices. To move our campus forward, we will focus on these strategic objectives: Student Success, Research Excellence, Community

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Engagement, building a more positive climate and culture, and aiming for increased visibility, brand and image. Our academic leaders are focusing on goals and metrics in these areas, while I'm doing the same across all areas of campus leadership, and involving our governance.

Finally, to successfully navigate this fourth turning point, we will strengthen the role of partnerships—the wellspring of our success. You may have heard me say this before, and I'm not alone, that the Milwaukee region and larger state are on the map too often for some of the wrong reasons. When we read the headlines about where the state ranks with entrepreneurship, or the infant mortality rate, or the rate of incarceration for black males in Milwaukee, or the income and achievement gap in our city, or how we are preparing for the state's future workforce, it is clear that Milwaukee, the state, and society have urgent needs. Now, more than ever, UWM – with its unique research and access mission – is the answer. I am grateful to my predecessors who helped lead our campus with resolve and toward outcomes that address the needs of our city, region and well beyond.

We build today upon the shoulders of those giants, but it is not UWM alone. Those turning points I mentioned at the beginning of my talk sprang from problems and needs. Likewise, responses to major turning points today require the precious multiple perspectives that partnerships produce. I'd like to tell you about a few:

Our M³ partnership with MATC and MPS is a very deep commitment and educational partnership unlike any that we have had before. Dr. Darienne Driver and Dr. Vicki Martin are both on the platform today—in itself a historic first. This collaboration will better prepare K-12 students for post-secondary education and jobs. It is dedicated to achieving student success in Milwaukee, from kindergarten through college. As part of M³ our ongoing partnership with MPS, MATC, the Greater Milwaukee Committee and industry continues to improve Bradley Tech, an essential technology and trade school in Milwaukee. Together, we can have dramatic impact when we combine the energy, connections and resources of the three largest public educational institutions in the state serving Wisconsin residents. Our reach is in the hundreds of thousands of individuals.

We are forging new work on what we call our Social Compact by bringing together first faculty, staff, and administration to channel productively the various efforts across our campus that are working on social justice, social entrepreneurship, and equity issues.

One part of our Social Compact will be what we have described as Solutions Central. This is a vehicle for making a difference in specific urban areas with measurable outcomes. The UW System is generously providing initial funding and we will be calling for proposals to focus on educational attainment and the achievement gap.

In economic development, our work with Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, Midwest Energy Research Consortium, the Water Council, M7, and many great UWS institutions is well established. In our work at the Innovation Campus, we will build on our work with the Medical College of Wisconsin, Froedtert, Childrens', the BloodCenter of Wisconsin, and many others to accelerate discoveries, create jobs, and promote the biomedical industry in Southeastern

Wisconsin. We must build on these areas to make an even greater difference in the region, thereby powering the state to stronger job growth and economic prosperity.

Our partnerships in urban health must also continue because so many in our area have limited access to health care. For nearly 30 years, the **College of Nursing** has provided primary healthcare services in partnership with social service agencies in Milwaukee. Nearly 10,000 visits are provided to Milwaukee's most vulnerable residents each year by Nursing faculty and students through our Community Nursing Centers. Thanks to Yvonne and Jim Ziemer's million dollar gift and matching corporate sponsorships, we will be able to expand our work in Nursing through our new Center for Healthcare Transformation.

We are so fortunate to have all of the valuable partnerships mentioned throughout this address, and scores of others – Johnson Controls, Harley-Davidson, Milwaukee Succeeds, GE, City of Milwaukee, Direct Supply, Milwaukee County, Growing Power, Kohl's, Badger Meter, and the list continues to grow. We thank the companies that have worked with us and you have my commitment to be a strong partner going forward.

In closing, let me stress again the key points here today: We have strong roots, resilient DNA, and will overcome and transform to meet the needs of the state and the headwinds present in higher education today. We appreciate the support of you, our friends, the state, and our partners. We need more of it. Milwaukee and the state of Wisconsin deserves more of UWM and we're ready to deliver. My counterparts across all of the institutions of higher education here today will tell you the same thing about the value they bring.

Together, let us realize the unequalled promise of our communities. We are a university that has many aspirations, to be sure. I will do everything in my power to transform those aspirations into the making of a university by which tomorrow's leaders and citizens will be inspired. For UWM, you have my commitment to uphold our core values of academic freedom, shared governance, and tenure with both existing governance groups and our new AAUP chapter. For the community, I commit to strengthening partnerships focused on economic development, social justice, achievement, entrepreneurship, and innovation—consistent with our core mission of excellence in education, research, and community engagement.

It is my great privilege and honor to serve as the ninth Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee at this pivotal time. I look forward to our work together – as friends, as colleagues, as scientists, and as humanitarians – to re-imagine just how far we can – and will – go. This means more to me than words alone can describe. My sincere thanks to you for sharing this day with me and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Go Panthers!