

*Creating a World of Possibilities*

Inaugural Speech  
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Keene, New Hampshire  
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When I was little, my world was a house and a neighborhood in Bessemer, Alabama. My immediate family lived within the walls of that house. My mother and father supported me and my four sisters with every ounce of their being. They sent us to kindergarten so that we could read early. They invested in the best school available for us in our city in the 1950s. And most importantly, they created a vision of our future – that we would go to college and rise above the limits of segregation. They created a world of possibilities.

And so I know that I grew up privileged. I am privileged to have my father present today to see his and my mother's dream realized in a way that neither they nor I could have thought of some time ago. And yes, my mother is here in spirit and we share this day with her.

I am privileged to have my sisters present today to share in one of the greatest honors that can be bestowed on an educator – the chance to lead an institution as fine as Keene State College: Barbara Giles Douglas, physician; Deborah Giles, investment financier; Susan Giles, lawyer and City Solicitor for Baltimore; Veronica Giles, electrical engineer. I am so proud of each of you, and what you have accomplished would constitute volumes. Yet, I would not be here were it not for my daughter Lauren, who has stood with me and embraced my move and this position with a vitality that is uniquely her own. Thank you, Lauren, for supporting me. You are truly magnificent. I also thank Ian Douglas Sr. and Theresa Sims for journeying here for this day.

I am honored that the Chancellor, the Chairman and members of the Board of Trustees are here and have entrusted me, as the ninth president, with the well-being of Keene State College. I am grateful that theirs is the signal thinking that preserves quality public higher education for New Hampshire citizens.

I am privileged to belong to a College community with strong values and ideals whose members live and breathe these values and share a commitment to this college and to each other. I thank the faculty, students, staff, administrators, and alumni who have come today and, particularly, I am indebted to the presidential search committee, many of whom served as the inaugural committee to plan this fine event. Thank you. And my personal thanks go to the women's rugby team who volunteered to serve as ushers at today's events. You have supported me throughout this presidency with your smiles and greetings and winning play. As my daughter would say, "You rock."

It is my honor to have become a citizen of the City of Keene and the Monadnock region and to have been welcomed and embraced. William Doreski (1999), professor of English at Keene State College, describes the feeling of being in Keene in a most remarkable way in his poem entitled "Faustus in Keene," and I quote a segment with his permission.

*Let Faustus sink like an insult  
into the clichés of scripture.*

*I'd rather step outside and feel  
the breathing of the leafless hills,  
the cold pink taint of lamplight  
clotting the quiet streets like blood.*

*Faustus wouldn't have sold his soul*

*if he'd lived in Keene, New Hampshire;*

*He'd merely have walked into the woods*

*Some star-riddled autumn night*

*and undressed and lain down in the damp,*

*and let the palpable world*

*absorb him, his bones left grinning*

*like antlers, his great learning past,*

*the sentiment of his tragedy*

*Dispersed like a whiff of a swamp gas*

*Discernible briefly at dawn.*

I am grateful that so many from Keene and the state of New Hampshire are here today: notably Senator Tom Eaton; Mayor Michael Blastos, whose stature was unchallenged in the last election – running unopposed; City Manager John MacLean; Keene city councilors; and members of the local legislative delegation and state legislators. I recognize, also, the honorable Ingres Simpson of the City Council of Glassboro, New Jersey, and Dr. Ollievita Williams, Executive Vice President of TriCounty Community Action Agency of New Jersey. Please stand and be recognized.

I recognize representatives of the schools of Keene and the Monadnock region, Superintendent Munson, principals, and teachers. Please stand and be recognized. I am so pleased that you are here.

I thank colleagues and friends who have traveled far to share this day, representing institutions where I have worked or with whom I have worked: Cheyney University of Pennsylvania; University System of Maryland; SUNY Cortland; and Rowan University. Representing my alma mater, the University of Pennsylvania, are three distinguished individuals: Mr. Charles Prigge, representing the Secretary of the Board; Dr. Ingrid Waldron, my sophomore faculty advisor, mentor, and former chair of the Biology department; and Ms. Jan Cohen, alumna and a community member of my search committee. Representatives are here from the Campus Compact of New Hampshire, the Society for College and University Planning, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges, the University System of New Hampshire, the New Hampshire College and University Council, the Postsecondary Education Commission, and delegates representing institutions from across the United States as well as from the United States Department of Education, Dr. Wanda Gill. I am pleased that Sweden is represented here as well, Ms. Cecilia Eriksson. I am here because of your collaboration, our shared experiences, and shared respect. We made good things happen. I am proud to continue to know and work with you.

Yet, as much as this inauguration signals a beginning of my time here at the College, it also represents a new era for the College and expanding opportunities for our students and our community within the state and the world. A new president completes an agenda left by a former president and begins a new one.

If fortunate, she establishes a legacy that enables the institution to move forward. According to Birnbaum (1992), “Most presidents provide the greatest benefit to their institutions at two points in their careers – when they arrive and when they leave.”

Presidential inauguration ceremonies in higher education bear some resemblance to those for the commander-in-chief of this country. According to Boller (2001), an inauguration is “an occasion to celebrate the values of the people.” For whether the presidency is appointed, informed through shared governance, or elected democratically, the inauguration commits the president symbolically to serve the people, to do her best, “so help me God.”

Rather than administering an oath of office, it is a tradition of this College that the president wears the same medallion as those who have come before her. So, here I stand with the names and dates of service of great men and women, scholars and educators every one, who worked to make this College what it is today. This medallion symbolically reminds me of the great responsibility that prior presidents have borne ... to honor and to serve this fine institution.

This medallion reminds me that I must do my best to continue the great work of the former presidents and to enhance this College for the next president. I am pleased to recognize two former presidents of Keene State College who join me on the platform today: Dr. Judith Sturnick and Dr. Stanley Yarosewick. Former Interim President Richard Cunningham also joins us along with former administrators, staff, faculty, and graduates of Keene State College who have come back to help us celebrate this day. Please stand and be recognized. Thank you for your contributions to this College and for continuing to be part of its history. This medallion also serves as a great reminder of the evolution of this fine College and that it has continuously developed over time to embrace a changing world.

## **Change**

Institutions of higher education are tremendously diverse, both in how they meet their mission today and how they responded to change in the past. Early in America's history, at the time of a largely agrarian economy, the need for teachers in rural areas stimulated the development of two-year normal schools. The Morrill Act of 1862 established Land Grant Universities to assure the best research in agriculture.

As the economy shifted to industry, the demands for education led to expanded four-year programs. Many normal schools evolved into comprehensive institutions, responding to the demands of increased program complexity. Community and technical colleges were established to increase public access to higher education. Throughout this time, research universities were dedicated to the discovery of new knowledge. Keene State College chose the path of becoming a liberal arts college while retaining the rich teacher education tradition of its past.

Each type of institution is distinctive in mission, yet each faces the same changing world. Our institutions exist within the same America. Our institutions exist within the same world. And this world has changed more in the past fifty years or so, some might say, than over the previous century. And these signal changes – in global politics and economy, scientific discoveries, technological enhancements, and struggles for social justice and civil rights – have impacted the way we educate our students.

None of these changes stands alone – each impacts the others.

The economic and political changes in the world have been breathtaking, beginning with the 1950s, when the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) were enemies within a “cold war.” Most currently enrolled college students will read about the USSR as a reference in history, while many of us in this room remember it as a functioning world

power. As a child, I remember emergency drills in elementary school to keep us alert in the event of a Soviet attack. My classmates and I knelt with our faces on the floor in the boys' bathroom of my elementary school. To be honest, those moments on the bathroom floor were not among the highlights of my youth.

From a compendium of significant dates developed by the Kingwood College Library (1960-2000), we remember that in the 1960s our country was engaged in the Vietnam War. The Berlin wall was built in 1961 separating East and West Berlin. By 1974, the Soviet Union began its decline, and by 1989 the wall that separated East and West Berlin was demolished, opening the way for the unification of East and West Germany into the Federal Republic of Germany. By 1991, the USSR broke up into constituent countries, ending the Soviet era. The U.S. has developed ever-changing relationships with China, the nations of Africa, Iraq, Iran, India, Pakistan, with North and South Korea, and other nations of the world.

We have witnessed the movement towards a single European monetary system. More importantly, during the nineties, European countries began to form a bloc that dramatically increased their economic and political power. T.R. Reid, in his book *The United States of Europe* (2005) describes the forming European Union (EU) and the establishment of manufacturing protocols that American companies must follow if they wish to exploit the European market. This example signifies the increasing role that EU plays in the world's economy.

In higher education today, we are seeking to understand the impact of these political and economic changes with the compounding impact of technology. Technological changes since the 1950s have rivaled the speed of light.

We remember when man first walked on the Moon and the first satellites were launched to make global transmissions possible. I remember using the slide rule, the hand calculator, and

batch mode for computers. *Yes, I am that old.* It has only been since 1959 that two US engineers developed the microchip leading to the founding of INTEL. I remember using mimeograph machines and typing on a Smith Corona. I remember when cut and pasting was done with scissors and tape. Xerox built the first FAX machine in 1966. And the Internet first went online in 1969. In the 1970s, Bill Gates founded Microsoft and Wozniak and Jobs developed the Apple computer. The IBM personal computer was introduced in 1981 and the World Wide Web a decade later. The World Wide Web changed the way we communicate, spend money, conduct research, and meet other people.

This technology explosion has also dramatically altered how we teach, how we work, and how we play. Today's colleges, universities, and schools are called to:

- Integrate technology into the curriculum
- Provide professional development to enable the use of tools
- Address spiraling costs of technology
- Consider start-up costs for new faculty who come into disciplines that are heavily technologically dependent
- Recognize the library for its important role in promoting information literacy and address the rising costs as more information is digitized
- Attend to the physical plant and infrastructure requirements to support wireless networks and technologically-enhanced classrooms
- Provide for computer labs
- Pay for software site licenses
- Respond to legal challenges because of downloading, privacy rights, and more.

The combination of technologies, especially the Internet and the World Wide Web, has shrunken the world. In *The World Is Flat*, Tom Friedman (2005) describes how the web-enabled world allows for multiple forms of collaboration – and I quote, “the sharing of knowledge and work in real time, without regard to geography, distance or, in the near future, even language.” Because of the web, workers and jobs are not limited by time or place. Work is global. Friedman acknowledges the 1.5 billion new workers entering the global economic labor force, particularly from India, China, and Russia, whose educational systems have prepared them for global competition. To quote Friedman, “If only 10% of this 1.5 billion are qualified to enter the world market, they still match the size of the total labor force of the United States.” (Friedman, 2005, p. 182.)

And so today’s students are being educated for work in a global market facilitated by tremendous technological advances and economic and political change. These changes also influence the way we think about academic disciplines, changes that are highlighted by examining recent scientific discoveries. I’ll use one discovery to symbolize what is happening in many areas of study.

In 1953, Watson, Crick, and Franklin discovered DNA’s structure – the double helix. Many students like me built helixes with pipe cleaners and Styrofoam balls. This groundbreaking discovery would lead to the identification of the genome, which provides the groundwork for cloning of animals and of human tissue. New fields like bioinformatics emerged, intersecting the previously separate fields of biology and computer science. Scientists are using computers to identify the genetic sites of diseases as well as the components of new medicines derived from plants found in the wild. International businesses are patenting these new finds.

Likewise, fields of engineering and chemistry and physics have united to form a new discipline, material science, which develops new polymers for space travel and industrial use. We have a wonderful company in Nashua that is taking full advantage of this dynamic interrelationship among the disciplines.

Computer science, marketing, and art have merged to form graphic arts where students can develop artistic images on computers to market products to the public. This is the world of our students, the world where disciplines are not separated by departments but rather are being aligned and expanded by the power of thinking collaborations of faculty and teachers.

Students need to envision the connections among disciplines, which are expanding in their applications. New fields such as graphic arts, bioinformatics, and material science are the products of merging disciplines, each with its own requisite knowledge requirements. Faculties are realizing their need to learn from colleagues in other disciplines and to teach in ways that assist students to see knowledge as integrative rather than separate.

Faculties and teachers are also developing ways to apply what they learn to real-world situations. And, as stated by the American Association for Colleges and Universities (2003), this work is “deliberate and intentional.” This is certainly true of the curriculum work undertaken by Keene State College faculty.

Education has been changed by history, politics, economic change, technology, and scientific discovery. It has also been fundamentally changed by the struggles for justice here and in the world, and again, the changes are dramatic. In my own young world, Blacks were segregated from others, relegated to substandard housing, schools, jobs, and healthcare. Race limited civil rights, as obstacles were established to restrict voting by Blacks. In 1957, Congress passed a Civil Rights Act establishing a Commission on Civil Rights to provide safeguards for

voting rights. Yet it was not until 1964, after Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. led a march on Washington, that President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, extending voting rights and rights to fair employment and housing. In this same year, Nelson Mandela was jailed for protesting apartheid in South Africa, making the struggle for equality a global one.

Those times were hard for those who believe in social justice. Who can forget the faces of school children in Birmingham, Alabama, facing police with dogs and armed with heavy fire hoses as the children protested school segregation? I cannot. We are one nation. All of us. And it is education – learning about the constitution and the freedoms that all citizens within this country should possess – that emboldens children – students – to seek a justice that should be realized.

I believe that colleges and universities should be bold and hold true to the ideals of justice in America. The Keene State College President's Commission on Diversity and Multiculturalism has engaged us in an examination of the campus climate. Individuals bravely came forward who said that they had been targets of words or acts of hate because of their race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation. And we, as a College, have set out to use this information to assure that every student, staff, faculty member, and anyone who traverses this campus is treated with respect and dignity.

In doing so, we will not abuse our freedoms – particularly that of free speech – to address hate. We know that this work is not easy to do. To open up the blemishes of a real, and human, community, means that a college may stand out not for what it hopes to become, but for what some headlines read in the media. Yet we will persist, because we at Keene State College

support values of diversity and believe that as long as one individual is affronted because of racism, sexism, or homophobia, all of us must step forward.

Why must we do this? Why not hide these issues in the shadows? The answer is a simple one. We plan to send our students out into the world better equipped to know the meaning of “One Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” I recognize members of the NAACP who are here with us today, whose organization has long fought for social justice.

I recognize the director, faculty, staff, and the generous donations of the Cohen family of Keene State College’s Cohen Center for Holocaust Studies, which has become a leader in the Monadnock region and in the state for promoting an understanding of the Holocaust and other modern-day genocides, lest we forget.

Colleges and universities continue to transform in order to enhance students’ abilities to address the world’s changes, as well as those that we have yet to imagine. To do so, we are turning to the timeless truths of a liberal education. In *The McDermott Papers* (2001), Donald Kagan, history professor at Yale, best defined liberal education by its four purposes:

- To instill within every student a joy of learning that will last a lifetime
- To provide each student with the wherewithal to pursue a career or profession
- To develop character, and
- To promote good citizenship.

Our education must transform whole students into their best selves.

### **Fundamentals regarding a liberal education**

One fundamental of the liberal education remains. The academic program must foster an ever-increasing depth of learning so as to heighten critical thinking and the development of

sound judgment. This concept is as old as thought itself. It was Socrates who clarified the difference between knowing and thinking,

“Whoever has a taste for every sort of knowledge and desires to learn and never has enough of it; may be named a philosopher (475c). Education is not truly what some [of its professors] say it is. They say they are able to put knowledge into a soul which hasn’t got it – as if they were putting sight into blind eyes. The task is much more one of remembering how or where to look, how to run the mind’s eye in another direction...”  
*(Plato’s Republic, ed. I. A. Richards, 1966, pp. 4-6)*

I revisit the concept that knowledge in and of itself is not the primary goal of education. Rather it is the learning *how* to learn and to think and to make judgments that makes one an educated or wise person.

Our students must learn how to master this new world – the new tools available to them to access information; the diversity in their workplace; the languages spoken; the amount of information available to them. Our students must be able to utilize technology to retrieve information. Once the information is gathered, our students must be able to evaluate, organize, and synthesize it to make judgments about the world. They must be able to communicate these judgments clearly, pointedly, and in ways that enable them to earn good livings, be productive members of society, good citizens, and happy.

Colleges, universities, and schools are transforming classrooms to enhance teaching and learning. By developing integrated study, where writing, quantitative literacy, and content are intentionally discussed, colleges like Keene State seek to improve students’ depth of thinking.

And essential too is the assessment of these strategies to document that learning and learning to learn have occurred.

## **Service**

There is a common thread that promotes learning, the application of learning to the profession or career, the development of character, professionalism, and citizenship. That thread is service.

Academic service learning has been described by Keene State College students as “providing an opportunity to bring the classroom to life through the application of educational learning while gaining experience and giving back to the community.” (December 2005.) Students are involved in internships, working in their field of choice and applying theories to practice. Some students may be engaged in projects that call them to integrate learning from several disciplines into a thesis and findings. Academic service learning promotes connections between theories and the professions.

Community service or volunteering promotes the development of character. According to Reverend D. L. Moody, “Character is what you are in the dark.” (Moody, W., 2001.) One student who chose to build homes for Habitat for Humanity in Louisiana after hurricane Katrina said, “I have changed.” Our students who visit Guatemala come back wanting to learn another language, and they learn to see America within the context of the wider world. It may be that students need human experiences to develop their best selves.

And service develops good citizenship. Some of our students join organizations such as the Young Republicans, the Equinox, or KSC Pride. They study the platforms of candidates and

learn about voting rights. They clean up the Ashuelot River, advocate for the oppressed, or raise money for neighbors whose homes were destroyed by floods in Alstead, New Hampshire.

We recognize that educational institutions also serve this country by assisting students in developing their character, their citizenship, and finding their places in society. In addition to the development of the mind, colleges have a responsibility to provide opportunities to involve students in service with the community, to help foster student engagement with society. Again, such beliefs are not new. For example, at Keene, service has been a hallmark of the College. On the portals at Keene State College it reads, “Enter to Learn, Go Forth to Serve.”

The Keene State College community has always reached out to serve the community. It was founded to provide teachers for community schools. It provided vegetables for families and instruction on how to can them during World War I. In academic year 2004-05 alone, Carson (2006) reported that the College’s students provided over 535,000 hours of credited and voluntary service that would have an estimated value of 9.6 million dollars. This service included students who volunteer at the Community Research Center. Here, faculty lead our students in working with community organizations to provide program evaluation services and initiatives like KSC reads or Foundation for Excellent schools, where college students tutor school-aged children. These students graduate to become alumni who have a commitment to their College and to their community.

And in return, our neighbors within the City of Keene and the Monadnock region give back to us. They support us as the Friends of the Thorne, who arrange the delivery of art to school children and make sure neighbors know that our Thorne-Sagendorph Art Gallery is available to all.

Our neighbors include the Kiwanis Club, which sponsors the student group Circle K that helps with roadside cleanup. Our neighbors are the members of the local American Association of University Women, who raise monies for scholarships for KSC students. They are the members of the Rotary, the Lions, and the United Way. And within this community are our alumni, cherished graduates who have pride in the College as it was in the past, who support us in word and deed. I am so proud of the work of the Keene State College Alumni Board as we carve a shared future where they remain valued stakeholders. A strong and vital partnership between College and community is necessary for us to educate all of our children. This College has blended its rich teacher education programs and strong liberal arts and sciences to assure the development of teachers with content mastery who also serve our schools. The schools in turn have provided fertile learning communities to help develop the best in future teachers. It is only in partnership with our community that we can achieve the purposes of liberal education.

We must also marshal our resources and use them selectively to fulfill priorities. We have begun this work by creating a framework for a new strategic plan, calling on each and every member of this campus community to identify our five priorities to fulfill our vision.

And so I look to the future. In 2009, when this College meets its one-hundredth year, we plan to celebrate what we will have worked hard to accomplish: We envision a College that embraces academic excellence within a context of civic responsibility. We reiterate our enthusiastic support for the principles of academic freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of information, shared governance, and the respect for the opinions of all who work and study here.

To quote the Honorable Barbara Jordan, former congresswoman from Texas:

*“We live in the world in order to contribute to the growth, the development, the spirit and the life of the community of humankind. (p. 128.) We are a people in a quandary about*

*the present. We are a people in search of our future. We are a people trying not only to solve the problems of the moment – inflation, unemployment – but on a larger scale we are attempting to fulfill our national purpose; to create and sustain a society in which all of us are equal.”* (Rogers, Mary Beth, 2000, p. 266.)

And so, I believe that colleges, universities, and schools – with all their diverse missions and unique histories – exist to provide a world of possibilities – a world where each individual can rise to fulfill his or her potential and to develop his or her character and mind. I believe that as colleges provide opportunities for students to explore the world through study and travel, we make them more competitive. I believe that as colleges provide opportunities for all within their neighboring communities – beyond the geographic boundaries of campus – to appreciate the aesthetics of art, to enjoy the sounds of music, to engage minds through debate and dialogue, to support others befelled by misfortune, to enjoy gatherings of friends, and to support business and industry, we improve our societies.

I end with a quote from President Lyndon Baines Johnson, in his special message to Congress, “Full Educational Opportunity,” delivered on January 12, 1965:

*Every child must be encouraged to get as much education as he has the ability to take. We want this not only for his sake – but for the nation’s sake. Nothing matters more to the future of this country: not military preparedness – for armed might is worthless if we lack the brain power to build a world of peace; not our productive economy – for we cannot sustain growth without trained manpower; not our democratic system of government – for freedom is fragile if citizens are ignorant.*

As Keene State College continues to fulfill its promise, I foresee a centennial year in 2009 where promises will be fulfilled; where we will have refined the academic core to strengthen teaching and learning. We have the courage to fulfill this vision. And so, as my parents and teachers did for me, this College will valiantly continue to create for our students a world of possibilities.

I am so honored to be the President of Keene State College and a citizen of Keene and New Hampshire. I promise to do my best.

Thank you.

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