

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY



Address from the Dean College of Arts and Sciences September 7, 2004

Good afternoon. Thank you for spending time with us today.

President Bowman, Provost Presley, fellow faculty, staff, students, and friends of the college, I am honored that you have chosen me to help you move the College of Arts and Sciences to new levels of excellence in teaching and research. Illinois State is certainly at an exciting point in its history, poised as it is with a substantially new senior leadership to raise its profile as *the* institution of choice among the citizens of Illinois and beyond. We are the university that maintains a healthy balance between quality teaching and substantive scholarly research. I look forward to working with each and every one of you to help raise the profile and reputation of the college, and, thus, of this great institution as a whole.

Before I begin, I'd like to acknowledge several individuals. I'd like to thank Roberta Trites for her many years of dedicated service to this college and to ISU as a whole, as well as for her graciousness to me personally in helping to make this transition smooth and seamless. I am proud to serve as Roberta's colleague not only in the college but in my home department. I am sure I will seek out her wise counsel frequently.

I would also like to recognize the efforts of Provost, John Presley; Vice President for University Advancement, Susan Kern; Dean of University Libraries, Cheryl Elzy; Associate Vice President for Research, Gary McGinnis; and Associate Vice President for Academic Administrative Services, Sharon Stanford. Each one of these officers assisted

greatly in making possible several of the initiatives I will be announcing today. Their support of the college has been unwavering, and it is clear to me that they have our best interest in mind.

I'd like to begin by giving you a brief update on facilities improvements. The college continues to improve the infrastructure that supports the high quality teaching and research activities of our faculty, staff, and students. Many of you on your way to this event may have admired the new façade of the east wing of Schroeder Hall. Last year, with the cooperation of faculty and staff in the departments of History, Politics and Government, and Sociology-Anthropology, as well as the Schroeder Hall Academic Computing Unit, we were able to move approximately 100 faculty and staff into temporary quarters in Milner Library, and the library faculty and staff have been exceedingly gracious hosts. I'm very pleased to report that we will be able to move all three department offices, and most of the faculty in those departments, into the east wing in January—a full six months ahead of schedule. Classes will be held in these newly renovated spaces in the Spring of 2005. Some faculty will remain in the Library while the renovation work moves on to the west wing, and we are looking forward to when they too will return to newly renovated offices and labs.

We are nearing completion of the final phase of renovations in Felmley Hall, designed to enhance the usefulness and safety of this venerable science building. These renovations took place while

teaching and research activities continued, and I am grateful to the faculty and staff of Biological Sciences and Geography-Geology who worked with Facilities personnel to coordinate renovation activity with minimal disruption of the academic enterprise. Professor Charles Thompson of Biology deserves special mention for his work as a facility liaison for the department; the efficiency of this past summer's work is due in large part to his energetic and diplomatic advocacy on behalf of his colleagues.

Future renovations in Stevenson Hall will update heating and air conditioning systems, enhance lighting, and ensure a better environment for teaching and learning in the home of one third of our academic departments. We will be actively engaged in the planning and design of this project to ensure that academic functions will be enhanced as much as possible, and we will be seeking your input as we do so.

I know that many of you are interested in the status of changes to the general education curriculum. This past year, the Academic Senate reviewed the general education curriculum at the end of the program's first five years. That review affirmed the overall excellence of the program but also recommended significant changes in how the program might be restructured to meet its goals more effectively. As a result of the review, the Senate endorsed a model in which the critical thinking and information literacy components of Foundations of Inquiry will be folded into revised versions of Language and Communication (COM 110) and Language and Composition (ENG 101). A group of faculty representing FOI, English, Communication, and the Library has been meeting throughout the summer and has largely completed work on a unified first-year sequence integrating communication, composition, and logical inquiry. The resulting curriculum may well prove to be a model for other universities. Additionally, students will benefit from increased overlap between requirements for their majors and for general education, thereby reducing their time to degree. These changes will have the effect of returning resources to departments to allow them to enhance their major and graduate programs. I would like to applaud Associate Dean Jonathan Rosenthal for his leadership in managing our general education efforts.

One of the principal responsibilities of any dean is to serve as a vigorous advocate for the college, and you will find the professionals in the dean's office to be tireless promoters of your programs and departments to audiences within the institution as well as to those in the community at large. I must admit, however, that colleges of arts and sciences across the nation have been less than successful in demonstrating the value of our work to the public at large, and this failure has contributed to the sharp drop in funding for higher education that we all have been experiencing. This decrease in funding became especially pronounced after the tragic events of 9/11, which led to a massive reprioritizing of public values and, consequently, a redistribution of public funds away from education and into defense- and homeland security-related areas. Put simply, public institutions of higher education, and especially their core colleges of arts and sciences, have been cut to the bone and many are finding it difficult to survive, much less carry out their mission.

Given this grim context, now more than ever it is time to reassert the value and centrality of the arts and sciences. We need to reassert our value and centrality to the community at large so that our work is widely understood and appreciated. We need to reassert our value and centrality to state and local leaders, especially those who hold the purse strings to higher education. We even need to reassert our value and centrality to audiences here within the very walls of the university so that the institution does not lose sight of the fact that broad knowledge of the arts and sciences is what *defines* an educated citizen, regardless of his or her profession. But demonstrating our centrality is not simply a matter of devising cogent arguments or making the standard allusions to the importance of a liberal education for producing "well rounded" citizens. Such arguments, while they are true enough, typically have little consequence beyond our own walls. They are narratives that we all employ to remind ourselves why we do the work we do and why we continue on despite the lack of respect and funding we face daily.

If we genuinely wish to demonstrate our value as a college, as a confederation of the core intellectual disciplines that constitute the university, then we must do so in a way that is meaningful not only to those of us within the college, but to those on the outside as well. More than anything, we simply must discover ways to reduce our reliance on state funding. To the extent that we depend too much on

state funding, this is the extent that we place our programs and centers and institutes and adjuncts and instructors and summer school in jeopardy, because these are precisely the areas that must be cut each time the state demands that the university return increasingly larger portions of its recurring funding.

This is exactly the scenario that this college has faced over the last three years, most recently this July, when the college was required to return over a third of a million dollars (\$342,630) of recurring funding. Rather than make yet deeper cuts in the already cash strapped academic departments, we chose to make strategic cuts designed to hurt as few individuals and areas as possible and to preserve the integrity of our academic programs. Consequently, we eliminated summer advising funds, cancelled a search for a much-needed technical support person, cut an equipment budget in the Lab for Integrated Learning and Technology, trimmed the summer school budget, and, I am sorry to report, closed the College Research Office—at least temporarily. Not one of these cuts was easy, because all of these areas provided important support for our research and teaching efforts, and I want to point out that closing the Research Office was particularly painful. The college owes a great debt of gratitude to Lucinda Beier and Cindy Caldwell for the excellent work they did for all of us in the Research Office. The college is working diligently to determine how if not to reopen the office to take over its functions in one form or another.

One way to help decrease our overdependence on state funding and at the same time demonstrate our value as a college is to attract increasingly more financial support from outside the institution—both in funded research and in gifts to the college. It wasn't many years ago when those of us who identify strongly as scholars or intellectuals would disparage fundraising as an activity that sullied the life of the mind. Fundraising was seen as a crass activity that no self-respecting scholar should ever stoop to. But now we live in a very different era and work in a very different academy. We can no longer afford these prejudices. We ignore fundraising at our own peril.

Many of us work in buildings named Stevenson Hall or Schroeder Hall. Some of us hold chaired professorships bearing the name of a generous donor. Many of our students have received scholarships supported by private funds. These and other benefits were made possible by the generosity of friends of the college. In an age when public support of public institutions is plummeting, we

desperately need the assistance of private donors—friends who recognize our value and centrality, friends who understand and are sympathetic to our mission, friends who are willing and able to support our work, both morally and financially.

What I am suggesting is that making the case for our centrality is integrally intertwined with our ability to attract external funds. Put another way, the fact that donors are willing to invest hard-earned money into the college is ipso facto an indication that people value our work. In very tangible ways, the perception and understanding of our value rise as increasingly more individuals have enough confidence in us to support our work.

Perhaps one mistake we in colleges of arts and sciences have made is to assume that everyone else will immediately perceive the intrinsic value of the arts and sciences, to assume that all we need to do is point out that English or philosophy or communication helps students become critical thinkers, or that anthropology or languages or sociology opens students' minds to broader perspectives, or that biology or chemistry or physics enables students to understand their interconnectedness to the natural world. These are arguments that we all in this room already believe; they seem to us self-evident. But they can seem empty clichés to other audiences when repeated in the usual academic way, disconnected from the lives of real people. I firmly believe that if we are to be successful in persuading others outside of the college of the value of the arts and sciences, if we are to be successful in persuading them that the college of arts and sciences truly is the intellectual core of this and every other modern university, then we ourselves need to become more entrepreneurial, to connect better with other parts of the university as well as with the community outside the university. Constituents outside the university are much more likely to understand our work—and much more likely to support our work—when they see it in action, when it connects in meaningful ways with their lives.

When the ecology professor helps a community restore the habitat of a native prairie, or when the geology professor develops a partnership with the local city government to use a GIS system to help devise an emergency preparedness evacuation program, or when a language professor institutes a community adult literacy program, the value of our work becomes all too evident—not hidden behind our own walls. And when people understand our work in these very meaningful ways, they are much more likely to lend their support to that work.

I fully recognize the irony that someone who has spent a quarter of a century producing scholarship that focuses on rather narrow philosophical issues is standing before you today to make the case that we must connect better with our external audiences. But even those of us who spend our time on recondite scholarship would do ourselves a service to spend at least some of our time connecting with audiences outside the narrow confines of our own sub-disciplinary areas.

Please understand: I am *not* suggesting that we abandon our present research and pedagogical practices or that we become a service arm of the local community. What I *am* suggesting is that if we are serious about reasserting our value and centrality to the public, and if we are serious when we say that we want these efforts to succeed, then we can no longer rely on time-honored platitudes. To do so is to turn our attention inward, to turn our backs—at least figuratively—on the public, to become the ivory tower we consistently deny that we are.

Given these political and economic realities, I take it as a principal responsibility of the Office of the Dean to lead the effort to decrease the college's dependence on state funding by increasing the amount of external funding of research as well as the number and amount of gifts and bequests to the college. We have already begun a series of efforts to identify potential donors and to present our research and teaching in ways that are understandable and that highlight their relevance and connection to society and to the local community. I ask that you join me in these efforts to make a vigorous and sustained case for the value and centrality and relevance of the arts and sciences and thereby to demonstrate why it is in everyone's interest to lend support to our intellectual and pedagogical endeavors.

The college has made an impressive start in making the case for the value and centrality of the arts and sciences, thus attracting donors to give a record amount of private funding to the college. I am delighted to report that the college raised a total of one and a third million dollars (\$1,335,591) over the last fiscal year, a 45% increase over the previous year. This rise in giving to the college is a clear indication that the case we are making is beginning to be effective, that donors—alumni, community members, and other friends—are increasingly persuaded that there is worth in what we do, that the arts and sciences deserve support, even and especially in these economically confused times. But, clearly, much more needs to be accomplished. By anyone's standards, ISU is a large doctoral

intensive university—enrolling, as it does, nearly 21,000 students—and the College of Arts and Sciences represents the largest academic enterprise in this institution: employing 45% of the faculty and 9% of the staff, enrolling 29% of the majors, and generating 52% of the credit hours. While the college has made significant strides in raising a record amount of funds to support our programs, a college of arts and sciences in an institution this large should be expected to bring in substantially more funding than it has. We have made an excellent start, but we have much more to do.

Over the next years, I will work through your department chairs to help discover innovative ways to make a strong case for the arts and sciences and to raise the level of giving to your programs and to the college as a whole. Given the immense amount of talent in this college and the high quality programs and the innovative research being done by so many of us, we have an excellent story to tell about our value and centrality, and I think it is entirely realistic to set as a goal an increase in donor giving over the next year even though the capital campaign will have ended. If any part of this university has the rigorous academic programs to inspire the confidence and support of our alumni and other friends, it is the College of Arts and Sciences. If any part of this university can boast the kind of talented teacher who truly motivates students to reach new levels of excellence, the kind of teacher who will inspire the confidence and support of our alumni and other friends, it is the College of Arts and Sciences. If any part of this university is conducting the kinds of cutting-edge research that genuinely moves thinking in the disciplines forward and thus inspires the confidence and support of our alumni and other friends, it is the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences. In light of all we have to offer, the college has a compelling case for and a legitimate expectation of an increase in gifts over the next year.

The college has already initiated a number of efforts to showcase our value and centrality and to attract potential donors. I have been working with your department chairs and other college leaders to initiate two new college-wide advisory boards. The first, the CAS Community Advisory Board, will provide a mechanism by which the activities of the college can be effectively communicated to the community, and, in turn, the college can benefit from the wisdom and experience of community leaders in the Bloomington-Normal area and the state of Illinois at large. The Board will be composed of individuals, many of whom are ISU graduates, who are

committed to the college and to helping it strengthen its position in the university and in relation to colleges of arts and sciences in our peer and aspirational institutions. The second, the CAS Emeritus Faculty Board, will be composed of distinguished retired faculty who as a group will provide the dean's office with suggestions and advice about college initiatives and strategic planning. While both boards will function in an advisory capacity, we hope too that they will help the college identify and attract potential donors to support our programs, faculty, and students.

In order to encourage and support fundraising on the departmental level, I am pleased to announce the creation of the CAS Departmental Fundraising Award. This is an annual award of \$1,000 to the department that conducts the best overall fundraising effort each year. I will work with the department chairs this semester to develop fair and equitable guidelines for this award.

While the college's various informational and fundraising initiatives remain to be worked out over the next year, I am delighted to unveil one project that will serve as an important tool to help us display our value and centrality to ourselves and to our various constituencies: a weekly electronic newsletter devoted exclusively to the College of Arts and Sciences. As you may know, I am a strong believer in shared governance and in open and transparent processes. So, for example, the college will publish detailed minutes of all CAS Council of Chairs meetings on the college website, and budgetary and other important information will also be readily accessible on the website. The new college newsletter, CASNews, is meant to serve as a forum where all constituents within the college can learn about developments, research, and individuals throughout the college. The latest edition of CASNews will be available to college faculty and staff every Monday morning. As the newsletter matures, we hope to expand its audience to include alumni and other friends of the college. Please be sure to let us know if you have a story that highlights our value and centrality or that for some reason will be of interest to the CAS community. I would like to thank Sarah Diel-Hunt and Sarah Walczynski for their hard work on this project.

Another way that a college can decrease its dependence on state funding is by increasing the

level of external funding of research. The college has made excellent progress in this area. Last year, our faculty brought in \$7,314,711 in federal, state, and private research grants—an impressive 24% increase over last year. Again, as with other types of external funding, the very fact that someone is willing to invest scarce dollars in the research of our faculty is a clear indication of our value and centrality. As you know, part of my mandate is to help raise the college's—and, thus, ISU's—profile as a research institution. Toward that end, I am pleased to announce a number of initiatives. First, beginning this year the college will receive a larger share of research overhead funds from the university: 5% more, or a total of 28%. I have arranged to pass this entire increase directly to the departments rather than to reserve a portion for college-level operations. While 5% of anything is a small slice of the whole, this increase nonetheless is significant. If the college had had an additional 5% of indirect funds last year, this would have meant an additional \$27,360 for your departments. What's more, this 5% increase may not end here. If over the next few years we can demonstrate a marked increase in research productivity, we will be in a position to mount a persuasive argument that our rate should be increased even further. I am confident that if we show significant results, such an argument will be received warmly in the Provost's office.

A second initiative is the Faculty Research Enhancement Program. To help augment our efforts to increase the college's visibility as a leader in scholarly research, this program will make available on a competitive basis ten awards of \$3000 each to be used to help fund a course release or a graduate research assistant. I will ask the Research Proposal Review Committee to review applications and to make recommendations as to which projects should receive these grants.

A third initiative is the Travel Supplement Grant Program. This program makes available grants of up to \$500 to supplement travel awards provided by your departments. These two grant programs are in addition to the University Research Grant program and other university- and college-wide research support programs. We will provide more details on these two CAS programs in the next several weeks.

With the assistance of the dean, faculty, and staff of Milner Library, we will begin this year a program that will enable each newly hired faculty member in CAS to designate up to \$500 of books in his or her research and pedagogical area to be purchased by the library. This partnership with the

library will greatly enhance the library's holdings and assist our faculty in their professional projects. If this program is successful, it may soon be possible to double the amount of funding for the purchase of library books for each new CAS faculty member.

The college has also formed a partnership with the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs that will present an exciting opportunity for CAS faculty. This semester, we will solicit proposals for the creation of a cutting-edge interdisciplinary program that will be designated an official Program of Excellence. The successful proposal will receive special funding to create a unique, academic program that will help bring distinction to the college and to the university. You will receive proposal guidelines for this program in early October.

I am delighted also to announce the creation of a new college-wide award: the Dean's Award for Outstanding Scholarly Achievement. As you know, each year the university presents up to three Outstanding University Researcher Awards of \$1000 each to university faculty, and the college presents three Outstanding Researcher Awards of \$500. The new CAS Dean's Award will comprise two awards of \$3,000 each, one for a tenured faculty member and one for an untenured tenure-track faculty member. These awards will be based on a calendar year's research and will be based on faculty input, including input from scholars external to the university. This will join the Arts and Sciences Lecturer Award as the two most prestigious research awards in the college, and together they will signal the college's commitment to excellence.

I firmly believe that the way to build a strong, vital, and prestigious college is through strategic and aggressive faculty recruitment, and you can count on our leadership in this area; but any recruitment effort is certain to fail if it is not backed by an equally aggressive effort to retain the excellent faculty we recruit. Toward that end, I am pleased to announce the College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Mentoring Program. Too often, institutions hire exceptional faculty but then fail to provide the knowledge and support that will help them succeed. I promise you that that will not happen in this college.

If you are a tenure-track faculty member who has yet to be tenured, I want you to hear me when I say that the university wants you to succeed. The college wants you to succeed. Your department wants you to succeed. We have a great investment—moral, collegial, and financial—in your succeeding. As a complement to the mentoring programs that some of the departments already sponsor, the college

program will concentrate on the meta-level skills and knowledge that will help ensure your success in the profession and here at ISU. I ask that all nontenured faculty in your first, second or third year meet once a month for a series of sessions that will provide you with a wealth of information about the tenure and promotion system, how to maximize your ability to publish your research, how to acquire the kinds of credentials that will position you as a leader in your field and as a viable candidate for tenure, how to balance your research and teaching obligations, and a range of other valuable information and strategies. Give us an hour or two of your time once a month, and I can guarantee that by the end of the year your chances not only of succeeding but of thriving will be substantially increased. Associate Dean Sam Catanzaro and I look forward to working with you personally over the next year in this program.

As you know, the college has spent much effort over the last two years investigating what measures it can take to increase diversity within the college. A task force composed of faculty and staff, The Underrepresented Groups Task Force, spent over a year examining issues of diversity, and last year it published its final report, entitled, "Recruitment, Retention, and Leadership Development of Women and Minority Faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences." This report presents numerous recommendations for increasing diversity in the college, and I have been working closely with College Council to empanel a committee charged with devising a concrete plan for implementing these recommendations. As but one immediate response to this report, however, we will institute this year a program designed to identify women and faculty of color who exhibit promise as future leaders and to assist in developing these abilities. The CAS Faculty Development Program will, on a competitive basis, make available to faculty the opportunity to gain substantial administrative experience by working for a semester as Faculty Assistant to the Dean. We hope that over time this program will serve to position many of our underrepresented faculty to play significant roles in the leadership of the college.

The college wishes to make clear that we value *all* of our instructional staff, not just tenured and tenure-track faculty. While the college employs approximately 330 tenured or tenure-track faculty, it also is fortunate to draw on the talent of a large cadre of talented professionals: the 160 nontenure-track faculty who help us meet our instructional obligations and without whom this college and the university itself would be all the poorer. Research shows that

those colleges that demonstrate their support and appreciation of these professionals are likely to enjoy a much richer teaching and scholarly environment. We in the College of Arts and Sciences are well aware of the valuable service these professionals perform, and to signal that awareness we will initiate an Instructional Faculty Support Program. This will be a regular forum where nontenure-track faculty can interact with members of the dean's office and other university officials, both to learn about new developments in the college and university and also to air concerns and offer suggestions. I look forward to meeting personally with all of our nontenure track professionals and learning how the college might better serve their needs and how they might better help the college advance its mission.

It has been my experience in various institutions and in various levels of academic leadership that often some of our hardest working professionals are not given due recognition for the hard work they perform in helping the university run smoothly—and, quite frankly, in making the rest of us look good. I'm speaking of our AP and civil service staff. The college wishes to acknowledge and, where appropriate, reward this hard work, and we hope to draw on the collective wisdom of our staff to discover ways to help the college operate more effectively and efficiently. We will institute a CAS Staff Luncheon each semester where all CAS staff are invited to discuss issues of importance to them and to interact with the deans and other administrators. And to acknowledge those staff members who truly make outstanding contributions to the college, I am pleased to announce the CAS Outstanding Staff Award: two \$1,500 annual awards—one each for an outstanding civil service staff member and an outstanding AP staff member. These awards are meant to demonstrate that the college truly values our staff professionals as colleagues who work side by side with the rest of us to serve our students and further our mission.

Similarly, it is important to remember why we are all here in the first place: to serve our students. During my visits to ISU this spring, the leadership of student government made it quite clear that students majoring in our programs wish to play a greater role in the life of the college. As a response, we will institute a regular forum with the student leadership in the college so as to open up direct lines of communication between students and the college.

I look forward to working with our students and learning how we can best serve them.

As you can see, I have just announced quite a few initiatives. I want to point out, however, that not one single dollar of college money has been expended to fund these initiatives. They are all funded by grants and arrangements negotiated with other segments of the university. This funding, representing an investment of over a quarter of a million dollars, is new to the college. To me, the fact that multiple offices of the university are willing to invest in the College of Arts and Sciences despite these very difficult budgetary times suggests one thing: we are well on our way to reasserting our value and centrality.

If you have noticed any theme in these initiatives, I hope that it is this: inclusiveness and a spirit of openness and transparency. These initiatives in one way or another are intended to support, recognize, facilitate, and reward the hard work of the various constituents that make this such a vibrant college. We are all—each in our own way—engaged in a common endeavor. We are all part of a strong, dynamic, and ever-evolving college, and we will continue to work together to bring this college to new heights. We may and probably will suffer additional budget cuts. We may and probably will face additional mandates from meddlesome politicians. We may and probably will continue to face a public seemingly alienated from if not at times scornful of higher education. But these obstacles, painful as they may be, will never defeat us so long as we stay together on our mutual path. Together, we will work to continue to provide the highest quality instruction to our undergraduate majors, our graduate students, and the thousands of other students who take our courses each year. Together we will work to enhance the college's—and, thus, ISU's—reputation as a center of substantive scholarly research. Together we will forge partnerships with community, business, and governmental organizations that will underscore our value and centrality in a time of shifting public priorities. And together we will continue to build a college that will serve as an exemplar of the modern college of arts and sciences. I am proud to join you in this endeavor.

Thank you for your time today.

Gary A. Olson
Dean and Professor