

Exploring a “Destination University”
Delivered by Brady J. Deaton, Chancellor
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Good Afternoon and a Very Warm Welcome to Each of You!

(Following Darlene Johnson)

I want to convey my and the University’s heartfelt thanks to the Jefferson Club Trustees for this wonderful gift of a new tradition of leadership recognition. Would the members of the trustees who are here today please stand (applause).

The last time I was so moved by an image of Jefferson was when we unveiled the life-size statue of Jefferson in a meditative pose, which is situated on the quad just below the Chancellor’s residence by George Lundeen. In fact, it is so life-like a statue that sometimes I think that if I just sat down next to President Jefferson and shared what’s on my mind with him, he would respond with some profound answer! However, in the interest of preserving my reputation, you won’t catch me talking to President Jefferson on the quad.

On a more serious note, I thank **each** of you for being at this event today and thank each of you for your tremendous support and enthusiasm for MU.

I am enormously grateful and encouraged by the trust and steady support I have received during my first year as Chancellor from students, faculty, staff, the MU Alumni Association and citizens across Missouri.

President Atkins, Curator Walsworth, President Floyd, Chancellor Emeritus Wallace, members of the National Campaign Steering Committee, Jefferson Club members, members of the faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends, I turn to you with a sincere acknowledgement and appreciation for your confidence.

And I also turn to my family, with **thanks** - and although my children, three of whom are MU graduates, could not be here, my wife, my parents-in-laws and my wife's sister and husband are here, and I thank them for representing my entire family.

Because several key leaders *are*, indeed, quite new --- today I also welcome them and celebrate **their** new roles. Among them are Provost Brian Foster; Faculty Council Chair, Bill Lamberson; Dean of Education, Carolyn Herrington; Chair of Staff Council, Alan Marshall; President of the MU Alumni Association, Jay Dade outstanding student leaders of the Missouri Students Association (MSA) Tony Luetkemeyer and Graduate and Professional Council (GPC) Mark Beard, and leaders of a host of student organizations whose activities make campus life so vibrant at MU.

[Pause]

Today, I trust you will feel all the excitement I feel - and the passion that energizes me - as I commit myself and our campus to achieving excellence that will mark MU as a “**destination**” university attracting, retaining, and nurturing the **best** students, faculty, and staff.

Over the past year, I have been struck by the parallels that thinking about ourselves as a “destination” university holds for comparisons with Missouri's past and this University's past --- both so linked to President Jefferson and the Corps of Discovery expedition. What is most inspiring for me are the parallels of vision and the determination to press toward a new frontier that links university leaders today with the visionary President Jefferson and the courageous expedition leaders, Lewis and Clark.

Today, our campus is deeply immersed in the process of defining and shaping a “destination” university for the 21st century realizing that “destination” must lead to new **frontiers** of learning and discovery...new **vistas of beauty** and **inspiration** that stir our minds and spirits...that lure us toward new challenges and new opportunity.

Indeed, it was this same excitement for the quest for knowledge, for exploring the frontier of land and people, and just such a reliance on fellowship that motivated members of the Corps of Discovery to overcome all obstacles in their search for the head waters of the Missouri. The Corps’ exploration was nothing short of an awe-inspiring experience of beauty and discovery for each of the participants in spite of the hardships.

Likewise, the total sum of **all that happens at this University** must inspire students and faculty to explore the frontiers of knowledge and uncompromisingly search for truth. This is a global challenge and requires global partnerships.

These were among the reasons why John Masefield, in his tribute to English universities, stated many years ago that

“There are few earthly things more beautiful than a university.”

Think about that for a moment: *few earthly things more beautiful than a university!*

Why is that so?! It is so because it is **at the university** that *learning and inquiring* minds engage in profound, in precise and in creative thinking, and **that** is a beautiful process to observe.

More than 2,000 faculty and mentors see **daily** the beautiful workings of the mind when they interact with our almost 28,000 students in our 275 degree programs and two dozen online options - students who are coming to new understandings of the past - **the present - the possible future - their own potential and also the promise** of humankind.

These new understandings come because students are being served by a University where questions of **great consequence** are framed, where **seminal** ideas are **explored** and **debated**, where theories in **all** disciplines are continually tested, where **innovative** experiments and projects lead to **breakthroughs** in the quality of life, and where the human spirit and imagination are cultivated in all disciplines.

[Pause]

During the past year, I established a Chancellor's Forum to engage students, faculty and community in serious discussions about vital issues of our day. Such issues included:

- **Effects of the Earthquake and Tsunami in Asia**
- **Higher Education in a Global Context**
- **Dimensions of Diversity in a Global Society**

Looking ahead, we have scheduled programs on:

- The US Constitution: Protecting Our Rights and Freedoms in an Era of Change**
- The Tennessee Scopes Trial and its Significance to America**

Students and faculty, in discussing these topics, grapple with **controversial issues, conflicting beliefs and competing values**. And, in so doing, another aspect of what Masefield found beautiful about the university is expressed. For Masefield found beauty in the fact that a university is “a place where those who hate ignorance may strive to know, where those who perceive truth may strive to make others see.”

Each day, my colleagues and I are challenged to make MU a beautiful university in the fullest sense of how Masefield applied that term to a university. And when we wrestle with that challenge, I face two questions which, I believe, are at the heart of our pursuit of a “destination” University that is both beautiful, forward-looking and courageously facing each **new frontier**.

The Questions

The first question is a fundamental and broad question about students:

How can we, as leaders, meet our responsibility to ensure student **access** to an outstanding experience in higher education at MU in a manner that brings this education within their financial reach, embraces the diversity of our population, and readies our students to participate in the global community of tomorrow --- for this is surely the mission of a public, research, land-grant institution at the outset of the 21st century.

Second, I would pose an equally complex question about our faculty:

What must we do to attract and retain the best and brightest faculty who are sensitive to the needs of this state, nation, and world --- and will collaborate through interdisciplinary initiatives to provide a vibrant learning environment for students of all ages?

We should all be focused on these two critical questions. And we must also recognize and appreciate the complexity of the response required for each.

Our response *must necessarily* be composed of **multiple** actions in a *wide range* of areas and will provide the structure and direction for our continued strategic planning and fund-raising efforts!

Where are we now? You can be very proud!

As I began my tenure as chancellor of MU, I specifically identified 10 action areas by which to **mark progress** toward our goal of becoming a “destination” university.

Our progress in these 10 areas has been steady and on course, thanks to your contributions. Some are especially impressive.

- Steady enrollment growth to new, record levels at the undergraduate, graduate and professional levels
- Unprecedented retention and graduation rates
- the second most rapidly growing major research program in the nation among our public peers
- Record growth in private giving, thanks to For All We Call Mizzou
- **A record-setting pace** in building quality infrastructure to ensure faculty productivity
- Exploration of new and creative pathways to diversify our campus
- A remarkable range of national awards and recognition for scholarship and creativity by faculty, students and staff in every college on this campus. In many instances, these recognitions are singular --- **as in the very best in the nation.**

Students:

This needs to be a racially, ethnically and geographically diverse university to prepare our students for the 21st century. We want all students to feel that this is their “home away from home.” This is an institution that is able to challenge the very best student and nurture all students. This is an institution that should be accessible to every student who seeks the experience only a flagship university can offer, and we must honor their accomplishments! This is an institution that best serves our state and nation’s students by being global in nature.

We must broaden the pipeline of students who are capable of succeeding at our University through applied research on critical social and policy issues, policy education, and partnerships with K-12 educators and private sector supporters.

Access to this University can be supported by offsetting the increasing costs of education through:

- scholarships
- revenue enhancement through faculty entrepreneurship, new patents and royalties
- becoming as efficient as possible while preserving educational quality

FACULTY

We recognize the essential nature of providing a successful environment for our faculty.

We can be a “destination” university only with the support of the best and brightest faculty in our 20 schools and colleges.

And we are **determined to recruit and nurture** the best and brightest faculty from diverse backgrounds and the best educational institutions in the world. We must provide an intellectually stimulating environment as the first order of business.

We are in a **very** competitive environment with the very best public and private universities in the nation and in other parts of the world. Understandably, such faculty are attracted by the promise of working with great colleagues and students, of having access to vital university supports, such as **an outstanding library and well-equipped classrooms and laboratories** and, of course, **competitive salaries**.

I cannot overstate the importance of alumni and friends in helping us to recruit and retain the best faculty through the For All We Call Mizzou campaign. This competitive challenge is daunting, and state and federal support must be provided to complement your contributions.

As we move into the future to address this challenge, a profile of new endowed chairs, senior professors and junior faculty will be developed on a program-by-program, department-by-department basis to guide our efforts. Program and infrastructure support will be planned so that the proper mix of private state and federal resources can be targeted.

TOWARD A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT

In addition to securing support for faculty, we must also assure their **freedom of inquiry** and **defend** the freedom of our faculty to explore **new opportunities in basic knowledge**. Great advances in the human condition have repeatedly had their genesis in basic research that had no apparent immediate application. We must support that basic research even as we strengthen applied research, technology transfer, business incubators, and a strong partnership with our state to improve the lives of Missourians.

A new social contract is needed with our state and our nation to support higher education in a truly global century. It has been said that “A nation consists not just of what distinguishes it from other nations, but also what binds it to other nations.” (Cyprian Norwid, Polish Poet).

Can anyone doubt that higher education offers the **most meaningful** and noble **binding** material to promote the discovery of new knowledge that elevates the human condition and offers hope for us all?! Can anyone doubt that there is anything more beautiful than a university?

I am always reminded of the importance of this last point of balance in basic and applied research and global interrelationships by the great historian Henry Steele Commager. Dr. Commager observed that although Europe gave birth to the Enlightenment, it was only in America that the ideas of the Enlightenment were fully realized through the application of new knowledge which, in turn, created new hope and opportunity for broader segments of the population.

WRAP UP

I believe this reflection on the Enlightenment affords a meaningful way for me to bring this address to its close.

For I believe we must hold ourselves responsible for continuing the spirit of enlightenment that led to the founding of north America's great public research universities and, especially, that institutional innovation of the land-grant university --- one that has captured the admiration of people worldwide and an innovation that educators and leaders in many countries have worked to reproduce.

It is our responsibility as leaders and citizens to ensure that the resources are available to enable our talented and committed students and brightest faculty to carry out what is truly a noble venture --- an exploration of our human potential for the betterment of humankind and the planet we live on.

I ask you, as I asked more than 4000 freshmen to do at Tiger Walk when they passed through the columns --- **I ask you** to Capture the Pride! Capture the pride of being part of the Mizzou family ---- of being associated with a University whose founders we still celebrate for their vision and support ---- whose students and faculty and staff are stellar ---- whose alumni are successful and loyal ---- and whose great future we are privileged to pursue together.

Capture the pride of holding true to the values of our University: **Respect**, Responsibility, Discovery and Excellence ... **with Diversity** a rich thread running through each.

Thanks to each of you for being here on this historic day ... For All We Call Mizzou!