

The Transformation of UW-Milwaukee

The Inaugural Address of Chancellor Michael R. Lovell

Friday, October 14, 2011

Opening:

Good afternoon and welcome, again. Thank all of you for coming today and for being a part of this great celebration of UWM.

There are so many people I want to tell you about, and I want to start with our master of ceremonies, Gale Klappa. In May we gave Gale an Honorary Doctor of Commercial Science for his continuing contributions to our community and university. Today is just one more example of his willingness to step forward on our behalf.

Gale, thank you very much for serving as our master of ceremonies.

Part I: The special people in my life

Many of you have played important roles in my life, and I am honored that you are here to share this day.

I am proud to be part of this University and to have the opportunity to serve UWM, Milwaukee, and the State of Wisconsin as Chancellor. Though we are a young university, we have accomplished much. Remarkable things take place here.

The beautiful performance this afternoon by our wind ensemble and our new medallion, which was designed and manufactured by our campus artists, engineers, students, and faculty as a symbol of transformation, are shining examples of what happens on this campus every day.

Let me start with an admission: I never planned on being a Chancellor. It certainly was nothing that I ever dreamed of growing up. Even after becoming a faculty member and then a Dean, it was never a personal ambition. But as the old Yiddish proverb states, “If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans.”

A unique set of circumstances presented itself. And somehow the match of this university, this time, and this engineer just seemed right.

I'd like to spend a few minutes acknowledging the people who have led me to this day and the transformations that are going on at this University.

Family:

Two of the people most responsible for my being here are no longer with us – my mother and father. They both passed away my first year at UWM and were very different people, but together they gave me the values that I try to live by.

My mother was a saint.

She taught how important it was to be selfless and humble, to make decisions that are grounded in faith. She would do anything for anyone at anytime. By her example, I learned that a miracle happens when you put the needs of others before your own -- somehow you get back far more than you put in.

I drove my mother crazy because she always wanted me to slow down. As a child, I could never sit still. When I was a teenager, she would tell me that I was going to have a heart attack by the time I was 30. I haven't changed, and she is still probably worried about me. I know my mother is here in spirit. I am so happy that the next best thing – her sister, my Aunt Janey, and my Uncle George from Ohio were able to be here today.

I learned much different things from my father:

- He pushed me to reach my fullest potential.
- He knew the importance of being resourceful, working hard, and never resting on one's laurels.
- He believed that you should never be satisfied with where you are and that you should never stop working to improve yourself. If you were not moving forward, he said, you were getting behind.
- He expected and would not accept anything but my best effort. He would say, "if it is not worth doing right, it is not worth doing"-- a valuable adage in making decisions in my role as Chancellor.

Even though my father is not here, I am pleased that his sister, my Aunt Judy, and my Uncle Tim are here from Pennsylvania to represent him.

Both of my parents would have been extremely proud of me if they were here.

- I would have known from my mother because she would have told me dozens of times.
- My father would never have told me directly, but he would have told everyone he knew, and even some people he didn't know, and those people would have told me how he felt.

It is also a real treat to share this day with the person who has traveled the farthest for my inauguration – my sister Cathy. Cathy was willing to fly 19 hours from Australia to be here. Even though we don't see each other often, we will always share a special bond. Her being here today means more than words can express.

I am also touched that my wife Amy's entire family is present today: Her father, Norm, and his wife, Sue; her sister, Sue, and husband, Mark; her brother, Norm, and wife, Beth; her brother, Jeff, and wife, Emily; and my nephews Eric, Peter, Luke, Max, and Will, and nieces Marie and Maeve.

And my mother in law, Lucy, who has treated me like her own son, never missing an important event in my adult life, and accepting me for the person that I am. She took me into her family in spite of my trying to wear painter pants to a wedding the first time we met. In fact, during that same trip, she gave me half of my brother-in-law Jeff's wardrobe so I had something nice to wear.

I am very fortunate that Amy's entire family has accepted me as their own even though I know it is not always easy, especially when we go on vacations. I am not the kind of person who likes to lay on a beach all day, so I would always want to drag everyone from the beach to hike up a mountain or go to an amusement park with the biggest rollercoaster. Somehow they put up with me and still invite me back each year. I know there isn't anything any one of them wouldn't do for me in a time of need.

And I must give my warmest acknowledgment to the wonderful children Amy and I are raising: Kevin, Anna, Matthew, and Marissa. I have found that no matter how great a person's accomplishments, they are hollow if you don't have people to share them with. Amy and I have been blessed with four wonderful children with whom to share our lives.

Our children are an inspiration to us as we strive to be the parents they need to help form their values and navigate the challenges of growing up in a complex world.

Our kids are not perfect – every day in the Lovell household is an adventure, and most mornings will include at least one child yelling and another crying before we head out the door. Each of our children is unique, and each brings different joys into our lives. We would not want them to be anyone but exactly who they are.

Kevin really knows how to have fun and is full of energy. Anna is smart beyond her years and brings great perspective to any discussion. Matthew is our quiet child with a big heart and will surprise you with his great sense of humor. I feel bad for Matthew because this was a big week for him – he became a teenager yesterday – and he had to spend his special day at Inauguration activities. Marissa has intellect, focus, drive, and determination, and is probably the person most like myself in the entire world.

And this leads me to the person who deserves to be honored today more than myself: my wife, Amy. Amy makes up for my deficiencies and completes me as a person. She has never complained about deferring her own career as a pharmacist to let me pursue mine.

I owe all of my success and accomplishments to her support through the years, almost all of which has been behind the scenes and without fanfare. I could never be where I am today without her. She makes me more effective every day as a husband, parent, and professional by showing me how to better communicate, listen, and care for others. Last spring before the graduation ceremonies, I had events and dinners on 15 consecutive nights, and she never once complained.

She is a great sounding board for the problems I am trying to solve. She even listens to my speeches when I practice. More importantly, she keeps me grounded. She doesn't hesitate to remind me that she doesn't work for me or to send me out to clean up after our family dog. I could never do what I do without her love and support, and I am extremely grateful for all that she does for me and our family.

Friends and Former Colleagues:

I am thankful to share this day with many of my friends and colleagues who have traveled here from across the U.S.

Father Bryan Summers has been like a second father to me. He married Amy and me, and baptized our children. In every important decision I have made over the last 25 years, I have consulted Father Bryan.

I don't know where I would be today if I hadn't found the Newman Center at Pitt's campus as a freshman and fell under Father Bryan's tutelage.

He played a critical role in helping me understand the importance of serving others and making decisions based on core values. I am so glad that he is on the stage to share in this wonderful celebration.

I am touched that many members of my former Pittsburgh running group, the Shaman Runners, made the trip to be here. I ran with this group for nearly 10 years, and the bonds formed during weekly speed workouts and three-hour runs on Sunday morning run deep.

We gave each other support and advice about running and life: memorable quotes, like the one from Matt Meehan who told us, "A man defines his character during his darkest hour." Even though Matt was speaking to an imaginary team going up the north ridge and was talking about the last two miles of a marathon, I have often applied the wisdom of the quote. Then there is the Shaman himself, Alex Sax, who was always able to put the events of life into perspective. So, Nick, Ed, Alex, Jack, and Matt, thank you so much for being here and making this celebration special.

I am also grateful to have several of my former PhD students in the audience today. I have learned as much from my students as they have learned from me. Thank you, Clint, Ilya, and Salil for being here.

I started my professional career as a software development engineer for four years at ANSYS Inc. I am grateful that two individuals from ANSYS who were instrumental to my professional development are here today: Joe Manich and Grama Bhashyam.

I certainly wouldn't be here without the University of Pittsburgh. I was at Pitt during my formative years as a student and faculty member. Two of these people, who are lifelong friends as well as colleagues, are here for this ceremony.

First there is Sylvanus Wosu, the Associate Dean for Diversity in the Swanson School of Engineering. Through formal training and personal mentoring, Sylvanus taught me that diversity is critical to any successful organization and truly makes a team stronger. Considering the richness and diversity of Milwaukee, his instruction has been especially useful here. He also helped me understand the value of a respectful and supportive workplace climate and of providing support for disadvantaged students. These values are one of the pillars of UWM's strategic plan to be the best campus to learn and work.

Then there is Harvey Borovetz, whom you have heard from today. I had the great pleasure of working with Harvey on many projects. Together, we learned that worthwhile endeavors do not always come easy. He taught me that even in the toughest of times, you should take time to laugh. Even when we took no less than 20 trips to Greensboro to work on an Engineering Research Center proposal, many times being at the mercy of US Airways flight delays and cancellations, Harvey showed me that such an overwhelming effort can not only be successful, but also can be a whole lot of fun.

Another person who is responsible for my becoming Chancellor is Swanson School of Engineering Dean Jerry Holder. Jerry could not be here today because of Pitt's homecoming. He hired me back to Pittsburgh in 1999 and gave me administrative opportunities that I quite frankly didn't deserve. I will never forget the last words Jerry told me when I left Pitt when I thanked him for the opportunities he had given me, "You were not always the logical choice, but you were always the right choice."

Current Colleagues and the Milwaukee Community:

I have been on a rapid ride since coming to Milwaukee in the summer of 2008, and there are many people in Wisconsin who have helped me. I must give heartfelt thanks to my wonderful colleagues at UWM, who have been unfailingly supportive. A great benefit of being Chancellor is the opportunity to meet the fantastic people on this campus and see first-hand the things they accomplish. A special thanks must go to my colleagues in the College of Engineering and Applied Science.

In two years, the College hired 23 world-class faculty. It also increased annual research expenditures from \$4.5 million to \$17.5 million. I am extremely proud of their hard work and accomplishments.

I am grateful, too, for the guidance and wisdom of the academic deans who were my mentors during my first two years at UWM. As Interim Chancellor, I had the good fortune of inheriting a great team of Vice Chancellors and cabinet members who are extremely intelligent and hard working.

I also have benefited greatly from working with the leaders of the University Committee, the Academic Staff Committee, and the Student Association. This team of individuals helped me and the campus get through a very difficult interim year. It was shared governance at its best, with everyone putting the needs of campus above their individual needs.

I could have never gotten this opportunity without Kevin Reilly and the Board of Regents. I'm sure that when Kevin started to get nominations with my name for Interim Chancellor from the UWM community last fall, he probably didn't know who I was. We had never met, and he had to be perplexed why someone with only two years experience at UWM as a dean was getting nominated.

But after a two-hour meeting with him and his staff in Madison, and a follow-up breakfast at the Original Pancake house with past Regent President Pruitt and current Regent President Spector, they offered me the job as Interim Chancellor.

I know that the decision could not have been an easy one. As Jerry Holder would put it, "I wasn't the logical choice." With so many important initiatives already launched for our campus, hiring someone they didn't know and with minimal experience was certainly a risk. Thank you, Kevin, for taking that risk.

My thanks also to the Greater Milwaukee community for embracing my family and me since our arrival. I am a strong believer in the power of collaboration, and UWM is fortunate that there are many partners in Milwaukee who have been willing to step forward and work with us. It is a new day in Milwaukee with many new academic leaders who all value collaboration, including:

- Peggy Troy from Children's Hospital and Health Systems;
- Greg Thornton at the Milwaukee Public Schools;
- John Raymond from the Medical College of Wisconsin; and
- Father Scott Pilarz at Marquette University.

I would also like to share a special thanks to all of the business and community partners like the Milwaukee Water Council and Johnson Controls who have stepped up to work with UWM to make Milwaukee a national and international leader in many fields.

The region is fortunate to have forward thinking leaders such as Mary Ann Wright at Johnson Controls and Alan Perlstein at DRS Technologies who understand how long-term public-private partnerships can build national clusters of excellence and change the region.

Part II: Poised to Lead

So how is the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee going to be an agent of change? Let me now address how UWM is poised to become a national and international leader.

We are indeed a university in transition, remaining faithful to our core mission while keeping our eyes clearly focused on the future and the opportunities it offers.

Our University is changing faster than ever. To take advantage of opportunities, UWM must change its internal structure to be more efficient, nimbler and better prepared to respond to a global world. We must take best advantage of the resources we have available.

Our current campus budget model is nearly 12 years old and was implemented to drive increases in enrollment. At that time, there were virtually no new capital projects on campus, and we didn't have any plans for new schools or colleges. Today, things are much different.

- We are working on significantly more capital projects. Right now, \$300 million is being invested in UWM capital projects. To put our current expansion in perspective, over the past 22 years, \$320 million was invested in UWM capital projects.
- We are growing our enrollment only in strategic areas—areas in which our region has significant strengths and needs.

To respond to these differences, campus leadership is working on a budgeting model that is designed to support both our current and future needs, and takes into account the operation of the new capital projects as they come on line.

These changes are not easy and require a fundamental change in the way campus units operate. I am very pleased at the collegiality and willingness of all involved to put the needs of campus before their own self-interest. I am confident that our campus leaders will continue to make decisions based on our core values to make UWM the best place to learn and work.

Our core values are, first and foremost, those contained in UWM's mission:

- Providing access to a high-quality learning opportunity, especially to State of Wisconsin students;
- Conducting open inquiry and leading-edge scholarship and research; and
- Serving regional needs by forging innovative partnerships that advance community and economic development.

These values are also reflected in our new vision statement, which was developed in recent months by deans, division heads, faculty and staff leadership and myself. This

vision statement is printed on the second page of the program and will guide us in the days ahead. Having a vision statement in place to guide us is so important at this time of transformation—a transformation that is in fact well under way:

- We are steadily changing from a commuter institution to a traditional residential campus. Our University Housing facilities have expanded so extensively in recent years that in Fall 2012, for the first time ever, we will put in place a freshmen housing requirement.
- This year, for the eighth consecutive year, UWM will enroll more Wisconsin residents than any other university. And these students are the most diverse in the state, with 25% coming from underrepresented groups.
- Those UWM students will not only come from every county in Wisconsin, but also from every state in the nation, and from 94 countries.
- Perhaps even more important, our students are earning degrees at unprecedented levels. There has been a 37 percent increase in degrees granted annually over the past decade. That means our Alumni Association is growing by more than 5,000 individuals annually.
- And those individuals are amazing. I know because I've heard their stories of success and overcoming adversity. I've stood on the commencement stage and heard the shouts and cheers from mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers saluting the first person in their family to earn a degree. I've seen the tears of joy rolling down the graduates' cheeks as I shake their hands and say congratulations.

They are the product of this great university, an institution where our research expenditures more than doubled over the past decade. Those research dollars support the creation of new knowledge that lead to new possibilities in our community and new resources on campus.

With the recent creation of our new School of Freshwater Sciences and Joseph J. Zilber School of Public Health, and the construction of state-of-the-art academic and research facilities, I have every confidence that UWM research dollars will grow even further. They will benefit our Great Lakes and the great residents of our cities.

And with the recent groundbreaking at Innovation Park in Wauwatosa, which will foster the partnerships and collaborations with the Regional Medical Center and organizations across the region, the sky is the only limit on what UWM will do.

None of this change has come easily. Each achievement represents the combined efforts of thousands of individuals who make up our faculty, and academic and classified staffs, as well as our community and private partners.

I know I can count on their continued best efforts as UWM goes forward through further transformation.

And they can count on mine.

Part III: A symbol of our transformation

As I look back on this inauguration week and everything that has happened to honor this university and my chancellorship, I am drawn back to the significance of this new chancellor's medallion. I believe the new medallion is a symbol of the transformation that has been taking place at UWM.

As you can see, the old medallion was very practical and plain, with the University's seal cast in silver using traditional manufacturing processes. It is much like the University 30 years ago: a commuter campus that was convenient and provided a great value for the residents of southeastern Wisconsin.

The new medallion, in contrast, is bold and makes a much different statement. The new medallion still holds firm to the roots of Milwaukee, utilizing conventional materials and mechanisms which have defined our city. Yet it is intrinsically sophisticated and advanced. It has been designed and produced using state-of-the-art technology, and uses colors and a form to portray the campus as a dynamic and vibrant community.

I believe the new medallion is a symbol of where our campus is today and the directions we are heading. Our campus's core is still based on providing a high-quality education to people from every walk of life.

But we have become an international research university, with world-renowned scholars and exceptional students.

There is a saying I have heard several times over the last three years: "As UWM goes, Milwaukee goes, and so goes Wisconsin."

When I speak to business leaders across the region, they uniformly say that UWM will generate ideas and technology to address the challenges of the city and state for decades to come. They do not just expect that from UWM, but they need that from UWM.

Like our new medallion, our campus has emerged to reveal brilliance. Our faculty, staff and students will transform not only Milwaukee and the state, but also the nation and world.

I am proud to be Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee at this point in its history to witness this transformation. Thank you for sharing this day with me.