

Regent Guy Gottschalk  
Farewell Remarks – April 8, 2005

Many have come before me to this podium on such an occasion as this and, in almost all cases, I have forgotten what they had to say. Now it is my turn to try, with a few brief remarks, to be remembered. I leave the board with some melancholy at the thought of a job not yet finished, and the end of regular interaction with many people who have become such good friends. But such is life, and I guess that when it comes to defending and advocating for our University of Wisconsin System, the job is never done.

I'd like to thank Jude Temby and her assistants, Cheryl Goplin and Diane Blumer, who have provided invaluable assistance to me in my roll as regent. During my time here, I learned a great deal from Jude about protocol and decorum, and about how to keep the inmates from taking over the asylum. Thank you, Jude, and ladies.

Secondly, I want to thank all of the Chancellors. I have gained tremendous respect for each of you over the years, and would proudly match you up with any group of CEO's anywhere. Your jobs are incredibly challenging, and to you all should go much of the credit for building what has been the greatest system of higher education in the world. Wisconsin owes you all a great debt of gratitude – even if it shrinks from compensating you adequately.

My thanks also go to all who have toiled in System administration. All of those nice things I said about the Chancellors also apply to you and, like them, you have my deep appreciation. I cannot leave this stage without expressing my deepest appreciation, respect and affection to Katharine Lyall, for all she has done as one of this university's greatest leaders, and for all that she is as a human being.

And, last but not least, let me thank my fellow regents. I know there were times during the "Charting..." study when it seemed like the inmates had taken over. But in the end your efforts, along with those of the other participants, produced a final report that I'm confident is valuable as President Reilly and you continue to make the case for adequate support of our instructional missions, for financial aids and for economic stimulus funding.

It has been among my greatest honors and privileges to serve our university as a regent and as President of this Board. I knew when I started that we had a great institution, but it takes a while in this role to comprehend the sheer magnitude of the amount of good that it does for Wisconsin and its citizens, and all around the world. God has given this state wonderful natural resources which support sustainable agriculture, forestry, tourism and our very way of life. The old adage that "of those to whom much is given, much is expected" is true. One of the very best things that our government can do to help our good people fulfill those expectations is to expand access to the opportunities of higher education, as our neighboring states are doing, and as opposed to maintaining the status quo or, worse yet, making that access more difficult.

What does the future hold for our university? The eternal optimist in me hopes that it will continue its traditions of benefiting mankind in a multitude of ways, on all of our campuses. The realist in me acknowledges that there will always be trials and tribulations ahead. Not so many months ago, we spoke of the university and the state being at a crossroads, with the future of both at stake. We can no longer speak in those terms, because the state has already taken the wrong turn, to the detriment of the university and itself. We can no longer say that a decline in the quality of the UW System is possible, because it has already happened. Witness the skyrocketing tuition for fewer and larger class sections, the sticker shock that discourages lower income families from higher education, and the steady departures of our best and brightest faculty and administrators. On the one hand, we are forced to raise tuition to keep the doors open and replace declining state support; on the other, we are discouraged from paying competitive salaries necessary to retain our teachers and leaders. We are on the downward spiral to inevitable mediocrity that President Weaver warned about thirty years ago. I am deeply concerned that a continuation of this trend will define the Governor's legacy as the man who turned a great university into a mediocre one.

His recent budget proposal falls short of meaningful re-investment in Wisconsin through its university. Wisconsin is adrift in terms of having any coherent higher education policy, but "Charting..." – a bipartisan effort by regents of both stripes – can be a starting point for discussions leading to the development of such policy. Again, the optimist in me hopes it isn't too late to change course. If the state's leaders can find a way to even modestly increase its level of support, and to allow for competitive salaries, it is possible to reverse the trend and return to our former level of excellence. I'm convinced that enhanced personal relationships between individual regents and state leaders are necessary to get the state and the university back on the right course.

Too often, I think, we suffer a kind of "can't see the forest for the trees" condition. We have to focus on important issues like budgets and pay plans, curricula, economic development and many others. But we lose sight of the larger, big picture ideas about how our university relates not only to the state, but also to our nation and to civilization as a whole. In short, we don't think as much about why we are really here.

A great Democratic statesman, Adlai Stevenson, served as Governor of the State of Illinois, ran as his party's Presidential nominee twice against General and then President Dwight Eisenhower, and served as our representative in the United Nations. I've excerpted some of his remarks from a speech entitled "*The Educated Citizen*" on these bigger picture ideas of universities, and of governments that function with the consent of the governed people. The speech was delivered to the Princeton class of 1954. I was going on five years of age at the time, but I remember it well. (quote)

"We in our country have...placed all of our faith, we have placed all of our hopes, upon the education, the intelligence, and the understanding of our people. We have said that ours is a government conducted by its citizens, and from this it follows that the government will be better conducted if its citizens are educated. It's as simple as that. We believe that the people will find their way to the right solutions, given sufficient information... We have a powerful weapon, truth, and we gain our strength from our thoughtful citizenry, which seeks and holds the truth with both its heart and its mind.

" 'University' is a proud, a noble and ancient word. Around it cluster all of the values and traditions which civilized people have for centuries prized more highly. The idea which underlies this university – any university – is greater than any of its physical manifestations ...[and] even the particular groups of faculty and students who make up its human element as of any given time. What is this idea? It is that the highest condition of man in this mysterious universe is the freedom of the spirit. And it is only truth that can set the spirit free.

"The function of a university is, then, the search for truth and its communication to succeeding generations. Only as that function is performed steadfastly, conscientiously, and without interference, does the university realize its underlying purpose. Only so does the university keep faith with the great humanist tradition of which it is part. Only so does it merit the honorable name that it bears... As the archive of the Western mind, as the keeper of Western culture, the university has an obligation to transmit from one generation to the next the heritage of freedom – for freedom is the foundation of Western culture." (unquote)

We tend to take our freedom for granted, thanks to the fortunate accident of our birth here. But consider these facts, which illustrate just how important that freedom is. Three billion people in the world cannot attend church without fear of harassment, arrest, torture or death. Five hundred million have faced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation. If we could shrink the world's population to a village of one hundred, eighty would live in substandard housing. Seventy would be unable to read. Fifty would suffer from malnutrition. Six would own nearly sixty percent of the world's wealth, and all six would be from the United States. One – only one – would hold a college degree. Thank God we live in a country with all of the blessings that freedom bestows upon us.

In conclusion, I leave this board with a great sense of pride that together during our watch, we did maintain this great institution to the best of our abilities, for the benefit of our state and nation and, most importantly, for continually transforming our children into those *Educated Citizens* – those free men and women of the future, empowered with truth. Thank you all, very much.