

ADDRESS TO ARTS & SCIENCES COUNCIL

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GEORGE L. MCLENDON

Duke has been much in the news over the last few months, often in ways which do not reflect our core strengths or values. Today I wish to share a few ongoing issues which I believe should be in the news. I benefit from a rhetorical lesson from Sam Wells. Sam always tells you how many things he will talk about. To follow this good example, I will speak about three things: the physical Duke, the mind of Duke, and the heart of Duke. (I will do so in reverse order!)

I have found that the heart of Duke is best reflected in a generosity of spirit which pervades much of what we do. Nowhere does this find a clearer voice than in our central commitment to need-blind admissions. The activity I am most proud to assist is our \$200M+ commitment to sustaining and improving financial aid for our students. While Duke has been caricatured as a bastion of the privileged (read spoiled), the reality is that Duke sustains a broader economic diversity than many of our peers. Roughly half of our students receive

financial aid, with the average amount distributed approximately \$25,000 per year. Unlike some of our peers, Duke’s commitment to diversity exceeds the endowment to support it. Thus, we must ask if we prefer the best and most diverse students, or the best and most diverse programs? I think the right answer is “yes,” and thus we view as critical the additional resources which diminish or eliminate such trade-offs.

I am fortunate to teach a large undergraduate course, Chem 22 (formerly known as “Bonkistry”). I realized in meeting my class that without Duke’s foundational moral commitment to financial aid, every other student would be missing. This would be, for me, an unacceptably less dynamic place to teach. I am also fortunate to have the opportunity to meet new students at “send off” parties each summer. One freshman related her unique experience of revisiting a letter she wrote to herself in the fourth grade describing the joy she would feel on being accepted to Duke. (Her fourth grade teacher had saved the letter all these years for her!) Imagine fulfilling that dream then learning that you could not attend because of family circumstance.

That possibility cannot stand and it will not stand. It will not stand because we are blessed with visionary alumni, parents, and friends (including faculty) who are responding to this challenge and have already made \$100M available in newly endowed funds towards a \$200M + goal. It will be the highest priority of Arts and Sciences to see this initiative to a successful conclusion.

I now turn to the mind of Duke, exemplified and embodied by the faculty – you and me. The Arts and Sciences Strategic Plan, developed by our faculty celebrates both foundational disciplinary and unique interdisciplinary strengths of Duke. This planning process was begun at the departmental level with broad faculty discussion and shaped and reshaped by input ranging from faculty committees to open “town meetings.” I gratefully acknowledge the important role played by ECASC in this process. Over the next year, faculty will devise the process to implement these plans and build national leadership in these frontier areas. One signature of the new intellectual initiatives will be opportunities for cluster hires in areas like transcultural analysis and visual culture, providing opportunities for departments to build excellence at disciplinary frontiers.

I am excited about the new opportunities created for teaching, learning, and scholarship by these initiatives. In parallel, we have begun a serious examination of our campus culture, including the myriad ways in which students and faculty interact. I am continually impressed by the remarkable insights and accomplishments of our faculty colleagues, as scholars, teachers, mentors, and community citizens.

Duke asks a great deal of our faculty in all of their roles, and our faculty rise to meet these challenges. It is fair to ask, in examining our culture, whether we can more effectively recognize and reward faculty who exemplify and implement Duke's deepest values. I greatly appreciated the opportunity to work with the Council last year in revisiting the "currency" of service, resulting in new ways to recognize and reward service activities. This year I would like to extend that dialog to explore additional approaches to recognize and reward exceptional undergraduate teaching, mentoring, and service. I believe such an exploration should include the possibility of performance based research leaves. I also believe that such an examination cannot be restricted to tenure track faculty, but must also include professors of the practice ranks. I look

forward to working with ECASC to form a working group to explore such options.

I end with the “physical” Duke. Over the last year, Duke has inaugurated some amazing new facilities, ranging from Bostock, which has transformed libraries at Duke, to Nasher, which is transforming the arts. These are the physical embodiment of the last strategic plan “Building on Excellence.” Build we did! This year will witness the opening of the French Family Science Center as a transformative event for the natural sciences at Duke.

This week, the University strategic plan will be made public. Arts and Sciences faculty will find strong resonance between the “bottom up” school plan developed by our faculty and the broader University plan, which recognizes our foundational strengths while creating new opportunities in each of our interdisciplinary focus areas.

One remarkable feature of the University strategic plan, which will be of special interest to Arts and Sciences faculty, will be the creation of a new central campus, which will be a

lively intellectual center for much of our critical work both in arts, languages, and cultural units. Duke is ready to assume leadership in both the practice and analysis of the arts and these new spaces will be a great catalyst. The planning of these spaces has depended greatly on faculty input. This input will be even more critical as disciplinary specificity is added to these spaces. We have a unique opportunity to reimagine, de novo, academic spaces within a 300 acre footprint. Our colleagues beyond Duke view this with mixed envy and incomprehension.

I end where I began – the heart of Duke and its relation to our strategic plan entitled “Making a Difference.” A wonderful spin off of financial aid is the opportunity that many students seize to write a note to the donor of their scholarship. I have read many remarkable letters. I will paraphrase only one. A young woman wrote: “I came to Duke to learn how I could make a difference in someone else’s life. If your goal was ever to make difference, you should know you have succeeded.” I think most faculty come to Duke with the same goal. You should know you are succeeding and have unlimited opportunities to expand that success. Thank you.