

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way." Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities

This is a transcript from the remarks I gave earlier today to the final Faculty Assembly of the 2011-2012 academic year.

Information that I have received late last week regarding both our fall enrollment figures and our budget for the upcoming academic year has created a story of contrasting places and spaces for our campus that mirrors the sentiment of the opening lines of the Dickens novel "A Tale of Two Cities." There is one "city" that exists in our present and near future, extending throughout the upcoming 2012-2013 academic year, that may well qualify as the "worst of times" and "the season of darkness" for our campus. At the same time, there is a second "city" that exists just beyond this time period, a place that, with both hard work and sacrifice, can and will become our next "best of times" and our new "season of light."

The first "city" we must discuss, and one that must be described with all due candor and honesty, is the place that we currently find ourselves occupying. We are a campus that is on the verge of witnessing the end result of its greatest contraction in recent memory, and perhaps in its entire history. You will recall earlier data out of my office reporting that our overall enrollment during this past year – 1,368 students – reflected a 6% decline from 10 years ago. In fact, last year was the lowest enrollment of the decade. In contrast, our best two years ever were 2003 and 2009, academic years when we had over 1,600 students enrolled on our campus.

Over the last several months, we have been tracking the Ohio State Office of Enrollment statistics regarding our Autumn Semester applications and admittances. On average, we have been displaying between a 7 to 8 percent decline from last year. If these trends hold and translate into our autumn enrollment figures, we will have lost upwards of another 100 students this coming academic year. Added to these earlier losses, we will be witness to a decline in excess of 20 percent from the last high point of enrollment in 2009.

The magnitude of that drop is sobering, and has very real budget implications. Our Senior Fiscal Officer, Carol Freytag, currently is estimating approximately a one million dollar shortfall in our budget. Part of that gap in funding comes from the lower tuition and subsidy we anticipate receiving as the result of the lower enrollment figures. However, as you know we are faced as well with mandatory raises that will account for an additional substantial portion of our budget strain. Further, health care costs have continued to skyrocket in ways that have increased our benefit rates. Finally, the fact that our co-located technical partner has been facing its own enrollment declines and budgetary woes additionally impacts our fiscal state of affairs, largely

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through our having taken on the additional assigned square footage in Bromfield Hall.

We will be working diligently to remedy this deficit, but we need your help, and we will be enlisting the assistance of others as well. In order to help you understand our present situation, I have asked Carol Freytag to assemble an account of what has happened to our budget since 2009. Hence, you will be privy to an upcoming report that will document exactly where and how cuts have been made to our budget in both last year's and this year's budgets. The amount that we have already cut out of our operating budget is staggering. Since I have arrived on campus eighteen months ago, we have pared approximately \$1.8 million from the budget. Said another way, I have had to preside over cuts that have averaged about \$100,000 a month during my watch. The cuts that have been made to date have been the "easy ones" in a manner of speaking. There have been minimal job losses so far, for instance, and largely have been confined to the elimination of retirement rehires in combination with leaving vacant positions unfilled. Other cuts have been confined to the periphery of faculty, staff, and student life. The elimination of support for the Arts and Lectures series is one example of that type of reduction.

In order to address our current budget shortfall, we will be working directly with our Budget and Compensation Committee and the Finance Committee of the Ohio State Mansfield Board over the near term in order to help us identify potential areas for reduction and/or elimination. Additionally, I have asked for and we will receive external help and support in dealing with our present situation. I have been in contact with Mike Boehm, our Vice Provost for Academic and Strategic Planning, who has directed a number of individuals to help us examine our budgeted expenses for the coming year and help create solutions to our current fiscal challenges.

The present budget dilemma also will demand the attention of additional campus representatives along the way. For instance, we have a newly minted Pattern of Administration document that calls for course releases. Of course, we built in safeguards that preclude our doing so during years in which our budget cannot tolerate such practices. Therefore, I will be asking the Professional Development Committee to explore how course releases given during the upcoming academic year at the very least would not add to our fiscal deficit. This is only one example of the kinds of issues we will have to ponder in the coming months as we grapple with our budget shortfall.

The fact of the matter is that the quickest way out of our present dilemma is to grow our campus, to turn the tide of student enrollment so that our numbers begin to increase again. Hence, I would be remiss if I did not point out certain signs of hope that the season of light and the spring of hope may be just around the corner. Previously, my office has reported remarkable growth in certain areas such as our English majors, which have literally doubled in size over the last 10 years. In fact, English majors now rival the numbers of Psychology majors, another historically strong offering on our campus. In addition, the move to a licensed bachelor in education is showing a sizable upsurge in applications and enrollments for this coming year. This on top of a remarkable increase in the graduate applications we are seeing in both

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Education and Social Work this year. And I remind you that we are anticipating additional boosts to enrollment when we open our bachelor of social work program next fall.

Further, our Campus Implementation Plan contains the promise of actions to be taken that will allow us to further grow and develop our campus and our student body in Autumn 2013 and beyond. For example, we are awaiting the results of the Market Analysis Survey so that we can make data-driven decisions regarding the selection of a destination program or programs that will increase the diversity of majors we offer on the Ohio State Mansfield campus. We must be both wise – and at least slightly prophetic – when we make such selections. These signature programs must have an immediate and decisive impact on our enrollments if we are to enter our next period of growth. Other equally important activities spelled out in the Campus Implementation Plan also must be pursued vigorously in the days, weeks, and months ahead. We will either become the masters of our own destiny, or else we will concede our fate to choices made for us by others.

My concluding quotation comes from John Winthrop, who said "We must always consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill—the eyes of all people are upon us." Of course, most of the world knows this not as a quote from Winthrop but rather as part of a passage from John F. Kennedy's last speech in Massachusetts before he assumed the presidency. Paraphrasing Kennedy, I say to all of you the following: The eyes of all people are truly upon us – our Ohio State colleagues, our students, our alumni, our community partners in Mansfield, our stakeholders in Richland County, and the citizens of North Central and Northeast Ohio. What we construct, the city on the hill we wish to establish, must be inhabited by individuals who are aware of the great trust that has been placed in us, and therefore the great responsibilities that have been bestowed upon each of us.

We must keep our eyes trained upon that city on the hill we wish to build. We must buckle down, we must make the necessary sacrifices, and we will become stronger as a result. Like Kennedy, I note that four qualities will help us to determine our relative success in living up to the obligations we have to this campus: courage, judgment, integrity, and dedication. I ask you to join hands with me in the spirit of these qualities as we embark upon this next part of our journey together. Let us be dauntless in our courage to make difficult but necessary choices. Let us exercise judgment in these matters that is both sensible and sensitive. Let us always act with great integrity. And finally, let us dedicate ourselves to the tireless pursuit of remedies for our present challenges that will lay the foundation for our future successes.