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Keynote Address by  
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Many thanks for inviting me here today. UGA helps to lead our state on the international scene, and you are among our innovators, our messengers, and the faculty who need to set an example for Georgia. It is my job (a great part of my job) to articulate the pride we have in what you do, and I advocate for our faculty, even in the face of occasional misunderstanding. But most everyone understands that to be a truly great professor – with care of our precious young people -- you need time and resources.

Helping to find resources is my job, not yours. If you keep doing what you do well – research, teaching, and service, people will feel it out there. Our research university faculty carry tremendous water, mostly without complaint, and I know how busy you are. I thank you for coming to this meeting and for taking time to reflect on teaching. We will never be perfect teachers, but we can keep learning to be better. The sign of a truly excellent teacher is that they never stop thinking about new techniques, how to boost student engagement, and how to communicate their content.



I taught for 14 years at Northwestern, then moved around and was a full-time administrator for years after that. Of course I had extensive contact with students as a dean, a provost, an acting president. But it was the sort of contact that administrators tend to have – meetings with student government leaders, receptions with star athletes, events with students doing incredible things.

All of this wildly happy contact with our very best, most ambitious, passionately-focused students, is a bit unreal. You *forget* how hard it is to teach; after all, the students are all so positive and engaged. How hard could it be? They seem to hang on my every word! I realized last year, as I was moving to GA, that I had pretty much lost touch with the nature and texture of teaching undergraduates. I'm mostly up to date on my field of American politics, as well as the higher ed literature -- assessment, post-disciplinary, accreditation, everything one would find in the *Chronicle*. But an entire chunk of my scholarly self was gone, being out of the classroom for so long, and it scared me.

So I took the plunge back in, and told the folks at Georgia Tech I'd teach a real undergraduate class last term, and I did. I met the regular hours and I did it solo. While it was difficult on some days,

having to turn off my blackberry for 2 – 3 hours, being with a real class in a real setting for a sustained period shoved me back into the teaching reality with force.

We had a great time and it worked out fine, but it reminded me how incredibly hard it is to be a professor. Everything came back to me quickly – the panicked late night prep, the aggravation because some students didn't do the reading, attendance problems, and disappointment with some problematic student writing. But also, the good stuff happened, including that fabulous realization that some of these students are actually much smarter than I am (they just didn't realize it yet, thankfully!). Maybe this generation will do better than we have done, with this world.

In any case, I'll get back to the topic at hand, communication and collaboration within institutions and across them. Let me start with the communication on campus – across departments and colleges. But after that, I'll tell you what I've learned so far about communication across institutions, and how research university faculty might benefit from it. Finally, let me try some ideas out about what faculty can do during this tremendous economic downturn, for themselves, our students and the community.

### ***Communication Within Institutions***

As preface, I'll say that communication across departments and schools, interdisciplinary work, and just keeping the channels open with colleagues, is sometimes vital, but not always. It's a means to an end, and the end is always research, teaching and improvement of the campus community. I do think many in academe fall in this trap of believing that we have to break down all silos and barriers. Maybe I'm old-fashioned, but I still believe in a lot of boundaries and distinctions. I think that without certain departments and silos, our work would be worse and globally non-competitive. We cannot trade in rigor and depth for interdisciplinarity; cross-talk must actually improve the quality of what we do.

I think it can be annoying when administrators tell faculty *how* to communicate across departments, schools and colleges. You can't force communication in the scholarly world; I don't think it ever works. I can't tell you how many “bold interdisciplinary initiatives that will break down barriers” from administrators I've seen fail. We don't have the time or the funds for these sorts of failures.

What does work is faculty themselves mapping natural, productive forms of communication across units, and faculty do this incredibly well. Faculty are not driven by money, or you'd certainly not be in this. We tend to be motivated by ideas and intellectual excitement, so we will – if enabled – map and pursue communication across units.

I have found, as a faculty member and later an administrator, that three categories of initiatives tend to work well. They involved some money and staff, but they can be done in a very downscale manner, something I'll discuss in closing. The three tools I've used:

1. The cross unit social/intellectual gathering;
2. Discussion and book groups
3. Cross-unit grant pools

To number 1, the gatherings. We tried something at Northwestern, funded by the provost, that worked incredibly well several years ago. An all-university committee – maybe 10 or 12 senior faculty – divided the university up into 8 thought areas we called “domains.” It was difficult, because the university had nearly every possible type of school except a vet school, I believe. I can't recall all the domains now, but some were: life sciences, communication, law and behavioral science, the arts, so forth. We then appointed a committee of 3 faculty from each domain to be domain leaders, and asked them to put on 3 dinner/programs during the year. Every faculty member on campus was invited to every domain dinner, which I guess came out to around 24 for the year. Cocktails, dinner where we randomly assigned seating, and then a program afterward, featuring faculty from the domain.

This was a huge success, and was part of the intellectual “gear up” for a university-wide planning process, part of President Bienen’s enormously successful capital campaign for Northwestern. Interestingly, some of the domains took off, and faculty met new colleagues, started projects, formed bonds they never would have formed. A few of the domains just didn't have energy and faded away. In any case, it was a faculty-driven project, and while the provost was enthusiastic and paid for the food, faculty did all the intellectual work and these were electrifying events.

Second, discussion groups - Within a domain, a book group or discussion group is a great way to get people together across units. I ran an American studies program for years, and we had a well-populated meeting every other month. Humanists and social scientists primarily. I think the reason it worked was that we sent out the book or article in advance to people who were interested in the call, and when you do that, they read it and show up. Again, the books cost us money, but the articles did not cost much. It was a terrific investment, and new bonds were formed that we'd never have seen otherwise.

Third, and last, although there are many more techniques, is the establishment of a cross-disciplinary grant fund. If a dean or provost can find the money, a call for small grant proposals that require the 2 or more researchers to come from different departments or schools, can be very effective. When there is money dangling out there, people find each other. I've never seen it fail, in fact.

Those are some ideas for campus faculty and administrators to pursue, and again, you can do them in an elaborate way or a very cheap way, but the basic incentive structures work.

### ***Communication Across Institutions***

As far as communication across institutions, we actually have a tremendous amount of it here in Georgia, and likely some of this has to do with size. But also maybe culture. Many of our institutions have joint programs and degrees, share students, and support each other. It's very impressive.

Thanks to the impetus of the core curriculum project, we in Academic Affairs in Atlanta are reviving the disciplinary committees that have waxed and waned over the years. Some of these work incredibly well, others have completely fallen apart, and some never existed. These are committees of chairs or senior faculty, from different institutions, that gather for course approval or specific initiatives (such as the heads of all international ed programs). I think that if our leadership

helps to organize these, they can go from committees that work on curricula to exciting enclaves for intellectual exchange and programming. If I can find some money, I'd love to seed these, and see what faculty can come up with. Federal agencies, foundations, and national professional organizations with money like to see statewide research and activity, so we can leverage the size and diversity of our institutions if we can just figure out the infrastructure to make it work.

Also, about working across institutions: You are UGA – you are large and so have many disciplines and leaders. Some faculty at other institutions might be apprehensive about approaching you for collaboration, since you have so much by way of resources and equipment relative to other institutions. It may not seem as though you need cross-university collaboration, in their eyes. So I urge you, when you are going about your normal business – putting together conference programs, thinking about sites for data collection or community outreach, to think about the USG institution nearby. Pick up the phone or email and contact a department chair or senior faculty person who might be included. There are loads of extraordinarily smart, productive, fascinating folks at all our institutions, and I think you'd benefit as much from knowing them as they from you.

I'll admit I have been a research university person my entire life, and did not know much about other types of institutions and faculty. Being in the system office has turned my world upside down, as I meet so many brilliant people from our two-year institutions, our comprehensives, and our HBCUs. They have a lot to teach us. For example, due to the lower preparation levels of some students at two-year institutions, faculty there do tend to spend more time than we do thinking about teaching and learning. They must, and it makes them very sophisticated with regard to learning assessment, for example. We need this expertise to start to flow over to the research universities, where we often fail to assess learning because our students generally know how to impress us, and even distract us, with their achievements to date. But what did they really learn? And did we really push them as hard as we might have?

### ***The Economic Downturn***

Let me close by talking a bit about the economy; it's a problematic time and there's no two ways about it. There is not much of a silver lining and no great good at all will come of cutbacks to education. We can manage our cutbacks, be more efficient, and mindful. We must do this, and our stakeholders depend on us to step up for the state. But it's a tough moment, and I just hope that higher education in the United States can recover quickly after the downturn is over.

That said, we can enhance our own lives and those of others, in the way so many people stepped up after 9/11. We don't have a national crisis of that magnitude of course, but we do have tens of millions of people suffering here and across the globe. It's overwhelming to watch the news, and see so many people in unbearable pain and anxiety.

Here are my ideas, for what they are worth:

1. Let's try and keep each other's spirits up, and lean on the time-honored lifeblood of a campus – the faculty party. You cannot use university funds for it, but we are still employed, so can buy food ourselves or even cook. I think everyone feels better after an evening of conviviality with our colleagues, so I'd invent a few more things to celebrate – the Ides of March (I think that may have passed), Newton's birthday, April fools day, or just make up an excuse.

It sounds corny, but I think it will help us, and most of all, the people who are our untenured colleagues. Focus on junior colleagues and on graduate students. We all worried as graduate students whether we'd get a tenure-track job at a great place, and that hope is slipping away for many right now. They need our support and our friendship.

2. Second, it couldn't be a better time for community service, and you can do it your way. Habitat for Humanity, soup kitchens, all that sort of community involvement is excellent and badly needed. But it's not for everyone, and it couldn't be a better time to donate what we have an abundance of – teaching talents. Think about the following:
  - a. giving a talk about your area of study to students in a local middle school or high school;
  - b. calling up the chair of the department at a high school and offering to come over to give a talk *to teachers*, about your specialty or interesting things happening in your field. I've done a fair amount of this, and it is much appreciated by teachers.
3. Campus beautification - If UGA is like all our other campuses, you are down to the bone with regard to your facilities staff. I know it sounds odd, again, but I have been involved in some great all-campus clean up and planting events with faculty, staff and students. You have to take orders from the facilities people – they know what needs to be cleaned up, fixed, planted! But these sorts of events have faculty working with each other, with staff and students. They raise spirits and boost pride in the campus itself, which is so vital to who you are and how you communicate excellence. So I'd give that some thought, and maybe some clever person can even group faculty to force some intellectual dialogue.

That's the end of my speech. Thanks for listening and for being here. I will close by handing this over to my colleague, Assistant Vice Chancellor Linda Noble, to say a few words about faculty development in the teaching area. After that, I am happy to answer any questions about teaching, research initiatives, politics, and of course, resources.