

FALL 2004 CONVOCATION ADDRESS
UC Davis Chancellor Larry N. Vanderhoef
"Crossing Boundaries Imagined and Real"

Wednesday, September 29, 2004
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts
Jackson Hall

Thank you very much, Judy, for that introduction and especially for being our M.C. today.

And I'm grateful, Mohammad and Kalen, for your sharing your experiences with us this morning. I know you were both inspiring, certainly for me, and for many in the audience, as well.

Dan, thanks, too, for offering a welcome on behalf of the faculty.

Kern, as always, you and our symphony orchestra have my appreciation for the role you always play in this annual campus-wide gathering. I must tell you that you and each individual musician always make me feel so proud.

Please now let me welcome all of you who have come today. I know you are busy people with full schedules and much to do. It means lots to me that you are here:

First, our dedicated staff, who continue in that dedication despite budget challenges, no salary increases and greater workload.

And our students, who bring vitality not only to the classroom but to the Quad and to the residence halls and to all parts of campus, and who contribute so much to our community through their volunteerism.

Our faculty, who share a genuine passion for teaching, for discovery and for public service that truly does make a difference in this world. It is our mission and they are proud of it.

And our alumni and friends, whose faith in UC Davis and generous support never cease to astound me. In that support, they are telling us that this campus is truly a dynamic institution that's on the rise, that has even greater promise for tomorrow.

That's a perspective that is shared, I might add, by Governor Schwarzenegger. He has approved a compact with the University of California. This compact lays the foundation for the university to recover from the latest budget cuts, to provide needed funds for salary increases, and to begin building again. Brighter days once more are truly just ahead.

Among our special friends in attendance this morning, I would like to acknowledge several people who hold elected office or are members of our Board of Regents. I'll read the list in alphabetical order, then let you recognize them at the end.

Ruth Forney, Solano County Supervisor
Sue Greenwald, Davis City Council Member
Roy Grimes, Vice President, Sacramento City School Board
Keltie Jones, Davis School Board Member
Mark Ornellas, UC Regent
Paloma Perez, ASUCD Vice President
Michael Reagan, Solano County Supervisor-elect
Richard Rominger, UC Regent
Joan Sallee, Davis School Board Member
Don Saylor, Davis City Council Member
Helen Thomson, Yolo County Supervisor
John Vasquez, Solano County Supervisor
Martha West, Davis School Board Member
Lois Wolk, California State Assemblymember
Mariko Yamada, Yolo County Supervisor

Thank you so much, folks, for joining us today.

The theme of today's convocation – "Crossing Boundaries Imagined and Real" – resonates increasingly with me, actually more so with each year's new experiences.

My travel to some 10 countries over the past two or three years – accompanied by Mohammad to one of those countries, and meeting Kalen in another – prompts me to think most readily of the boundaries between nations.

But there are so many additional ways to interpret that notion of boundaries that potentially separate and divide – from perhaps geographic, cultural, religious, social, sexual orientation or political boundaries – to those between academic disciplines, between in-the-classroom and outside-the-classroom experiences, between the personal and the professional. And I'm sure I've just scratched the surface in thinking about things that can be potentially divisive, that can be seen as "us" and "other," as "self" and "not self," as representing an "authentic" world view or one that's not so.

But what my travels, in particular, have taught me is that many boundaries – many boundaries – initially thought to be impermeable and absolute – are not. In fact, if you look with an open mind – and with an open heart – those boundaries can turn into bridges.

The stories Mohammad and Kalen have shared certainly suggest exactly that.

Mohammad and I, and Neal Van Alfen, Enrique Lavernia, Bill Lacy and Bob Kerr, certainly did not go to Iran last spring – and, remember, Iran is a country deemed by some as a member of the “Axis of Evil” – we didn’t go to make a political statement or to seek publicity. We were simply one university wanting to talk to another university about ways in which we could work together. And, in the process, we hoped one small step could be taken toward a return to normalcy in the Middle East, that we could convert a boundary, even a boundary enforced, in this case, by a political embargo, into a bridge. We were told, in fact, that we were the first U.S. university delegation permitted to visit Iran since that country’s 1979 revolution.

In that initial visit, we didn’t sign agreements or contracts with our Iranian colleagues, but we sat together and we ate together, we discussed our separate countries and cultures together, and we came to better understand our universities, our similarities and our differences, and our shared interest in a community of scholars without borders.

In other words – we began to build a bridge.

I met Kalen in Santiago, Chile, this June when she was just wrapping up her studies there as a UC Education Abroad student. She and her fellow student travelers confirmed what I’ve heard from so many other students who have taken advantage of opportunities to immerse themselves in a different culture – that the experience had truly changed their lives. Over and over I’ve heard them say, “It was, for me, a life-changing experience.”

It wasn’t just that they learned the customs and history of their host country – and they certainly did do that – but that they grew to understand that, with the same set of facts on the table, people in different cultures and countries could come to totally valid, but totally different, conclusions. And that those conclusions were just as legitimate, just as insightful and just as deserving of respect. Again, bridges formed where boundaries were before.

And in both Iran and Chile, we were aided by bridges already being built by a number of our alumni who have risen to positions of leadership, who have contributed substantially to their countries’ development and who want for their children the same opportunities they had.

I may sound hopelessly idealistic on this count, but I really do feel that this kind of bridge-building is our best hope for world peace. I have had too many face-to-face, people-to-people experiences to think otherwise.

American political theorist Benjamin Barber says, and I quote: “... today we have a world of criminals without frontiers, weapons without frontiers, terrorists without frontiers, AIDS without frontiers....What we are lacking is citizens without frontiers, democracy without frontiers, justice without frontiers.”

And what better place to prepare those world citizens, people who can see bridges instead of boundaries, than at our colleges and universities? I hope that a global perspective will eventually permeate our curriculum and our discussions and that the day will come when all of our students will be able to have an experience in another culture.

More and more this notion permeates my life. I am enjoying a new CD titled "Bridge to Havana." It was recorded in 1999 during a relative thaw in U.S.-Cuban relations. This U.S.-Cuban project created a bridge across two cultural and musical traditions that drew more than 70 American, European and Cuban artists to Havana. The United States was represented by such musical artists as Burt Bacharach, Gladys Knight, Bonnie Raitt and Mick Fleetwood. There they were randomly paired with contemporary Cuban musicians for a weeklong recording session. Despite language barriers, despite politics, despite time pressures, they wrote, and they arranged and they recorded more than 35 original songs – 35 bridges when you think about it, 35 bridges where before there were none.

Our own Dave Webb, director of audience development for the Mondavi Center, visited Cuba last fall to preview potential artists to perform in this hall. He says of his experience, quote: "It was an incredible trip, a beautiful country, a lovely people enduring wearying circumstances....An island filled with fine artists like the ones I met, who would like nothing more than to see Mondavi Center for themselves....But as of this writing, visas in and out of Cuba are impossible to come by."

Seemingly random visa restrictions certainly make bridge-building immensely more difficult, and we must work in all possible ways to change that. Nationwide, international graduate student applications to our research universities are down by at least 25 percent. Within the University of California, international undergraduate applications have declined 36 percent in the last two years. That hurts us. It does not endear us to our world neighbors. It does not make us more secure. It hurts us. Our country is great because of our open doors, not closed boundaries, and we must never forget FDR's warning about "fear itself."

Fortunately, closer to home, our campus family chooses daily to hurdle many kinds of boundaries in favor of creating bridges.

Our medical center, for example, has pioneered the use of telemedicine technology. There we use telephone and satellite transmissions to provide hospitals in underserved areas with specialty care and medical education without which they could lose accreditation. Telemedicine can make a doctor's care available to schools that can no longer afford full-time school nurses, to homebound seniors and others who face transportation problems, and to inmates in correctional facilities that lack on-site physicians. We are truly turning healthcare boundaries into healing bridges.

The hospital also provides interpretive services for patients who collectively speak more than 130 different languages and dialects, interpretive services that are also fully

sensitive to the patients' culture. Here the boundaries are language and culture and we have bridges.

Our professional schools offer volunteer services as an important part of their students' training. The law school, for example, provides pro bono clinical programs in civil rights, family law and domestic violence, prisoners' rights, and immigration law. The medical school provides five free community clinics for specific medically underserved populations, including Asians, Latinos, African-Americans, Muslims, and intravenous drug users and their families, a group that is just as needy. Our Graduate School of Management students prepare, without charge, business plans for not-for-profit companies.

All of these served populations felt real boundaries, inhibiting boundaries – until they heard about UC Davis bridges.

And, recently, listen to this, as a community service, nearly 400 faculty, staff and students of our School of Veterinary Medicine participated in Sacramento Spay Day 2004. That was an event organized by UC Davis alumna Jennifer Fearing, head of the Sacramento Area Animal Coalition. Our volunteers provided spay and neuter operations for 300 dogs and cats owned by lower-income regional residents. Dr. Jan Ilkiw orchestrated all the surgeries and arranged for volunteers from virtually every department in the vet school to participate. Through Jan's and Jennifer's leadership, more than 1,000 low-cost spay and neuter procedures were performed across the Sacramento area and the births of an estimated 10,000 unwanted animals were prevented – all of that in just one day's activities.

I'm so glad that Jennifer was able to join us today. Jennifer, could you please stand and be recognized?

Volunteerism, which turns many potential boundaries into bridges, truly does come naturally to our campus family. In fact, it's an unusually strong commitment for us. Our students, staff and faculty last year provided more than 103,000 hours of service through the Human Corps. That program's director, Al Harrison, believes we would do even more if we were better aware of community needs. So he is launching an initiative this year to match additional campus volunteers with community service opportunities. And, you know, even with everyone already working so hard, I bet he'll get takers.

Last spring I had the pleasure of participating in our annual Community Service Awards celebration. We honored lots of people – 181 students, 24 student groups and 28 staff members – for their service. I'd like to mention four of those awardees whose exceptional service was specially recognized that day.

- Heather Ricks was recognized with the Outstanding Graduate or Professional School Student Award for, among many other things, initiating monthly work parties of her graduate group and helping to organize a cross-country bike ride for the Michael J. Fox Foundation,

riding from Bar Harbor, Maine, all the way to Anacortes, Washington over three months. Along the way, she educated people she met about Parkinson's Disease and raised funds for the Foundation. In all her volunteer experiences, she says she has been, quote, "constantly reminded of the reciprocal exchange of good feelings and hope that results from volunteering" and "how a community can make things happen."

- Shifa Community Clinic is a student-run Sacramento clinic that provides health care to underprivileged patients. These students received the Outstanding Group Award. Dr. Amir Zeki, who oversees the clinic's students, says, and I quote, "working at the clinic gets at the heart of the original experience that students and physicians yearn for. It is a great inspiration and a generator of hope. You are reminded of why you practice medicine." It is, in fact, the thrill of creating a bridge where a boundary once stood....

Dr. Zeki, I understand you are with us today, along with two of the clinic's student volunteers – Ryan Laponis and Samia Ghaffar. Could you all please stand and be recognized?

- Clara Robison is a recently retired administrative assistant in the Department of Food Science and Technology. She was recognized with the Outstanding Staff Award. Clara notes that volunteerism continues to be a great joy in her life. Her service includes assisting with the monthly International House "international meals" program, helping to prepare Indian cuisine for Yolo County Food Bank fund-raising events, volunteering weekly at Davis Community Meals, providing nearly 200 brownbag lunches for an outreach program to the homeless, donating items to the "Grace in Action" service program, and even contributing cross-stitch and other gifts to the Asian Convalescent Hospital. It's clear that Clara never saw a boundary without seeing the potential for a bridge.

Clara, I'm very glad that you could also be with us today. In fact, when we called to invite you to attend this morning, we found you in your old office – but this time as a volunteer. Now that's the volunteer spirit! Could you also stand and be recognized?

- Kirstin Woody was recognized with the Outstanding Undergraduate Award. Kirstin led children's ministries in a refugee camp in Nicaragua. She volunteered at Horseplay Therapeutic Riding Center for disabled individuals. She served on the Yolo County Relay for Life committee in support of the American Cancer Society. She assisted with Davis Community Meals and with the Clinica Tepati student-run clinic in downtown Sacramento, and she worked with pharmaceutical companies to ensure that less-fortunate patients can receive their medication for free.

Kirstin agrees that she does lots, but she adds, “I also believe that I have served others by being a good daughter, a faithful friend, and a welcoming stranger.”

Kirstin was also able to join us this morning. Kirstin, could you please stand and be recognized?

I could tell you so much more – about alumnus Tom Stallard, who saw a small city, Woodland, and too many boarded-up store fronts, vacated shops that stood as stark boundaries to renewal. Tom went about his personal solution with caring and heart, renovating those Victorian-era commercial buildings, one by one, then helping to launch new small businesses by offering affordable leases. He built his bridges bit by piece, and now 37 new tenant businesses are in residence where none otherwise would have been. Tom sees the world through rose-colored glasses and so that’s what his wife, Meg, named this new boundaries-to-bridges company of Tom’s – Rose Colored Glass Company. I’m guessing they get occasional calls inquiring about window repair, but that company name sure does describe Tom.

Tom and Meg, I know you’re also here today. Could you please stand? We’re proud of what you do to support your community and grateful for all you do to support UC Davis.

I could talk about the McConeghy property, where two cities, a county, a land trust, a university, the state of California and the federal government have all joined forces to preserve 300 acres of agricultural land along Interstate-80 between Davis and Dixon. With all of those agencies involved, none known for speedy process, it seemed an impossible task, an unsurmountable boundary, but a few people, like Karl Mohr and John Yates of UC Davis, and their colleagues with the City of Davis, the City of Dixon, Solano County, the Solano Land Trust, the California Department of Conservation and the U.S. Department of Agriculture – they built a bridge and turned the impossible into a legacy accomplishment, an accomplishment for the ages.

Karl and John, are you with us this morning? Could you please stand?

Perhaps one of the most challenging circumstances in Davis during my 20 years here has been the increasing absence of affordable housing for our staff and faculty. Everybody we hire experiences sticker shock when they see a median home cost of more than \$500,000. I believe so much in the advantages of our campus family members living close to the campus and being part of the fabric of this community, but we now have a major boundary to living in Davis, a boundary that is in need of bridges. Those bridges to housing affordability are taking many forms, but one of them will be West Village. I invite you to watch this beautiful new neighborhood grow over the coming years. It will not only provide greatly needed housing for our faculty, staff and students but it will be a wonderful resource for our city – from its magnet high school and community college classrooms to its recreational fields, ponds, and bike paths.

So many wonderful stories of bridge-building, so little time this morning to tell them. Unitrans, our student-run bus system that provides transportation to the entire city of Davis...the Mondavi Center, which enriches the lives of Northern California children and adults through the arts...our new Genome and Biomedical Sciences Facility that, through its unique combination of scientists, demonstrates that discovery doesn't stop at discipline boundaries...our School of Education and M.I.N.D. Institute partnership with St. HOPE Public Schools to create a Smart Start pre-school to serve at-risk children....The list could go on and on.

What that list illustrates is what I know we recognize in our hearts and in our bones – that bridge-building is the answer to boundaries imagined and real. I know it's not always clear and I know it's not always easy to see and build those bridges when the boundaries loom so large. But the impact of that bridge-building is immense, and the rewards – both personal and professional – are so gratifying.

Thank you very much for coming today, and for helping us to begin this new academic year as a family – a family that truly wants the best for one another and for all those this university serves. You are actively engaged in making UC Davis the best that it can be and for that I am immensely grateful. Thank you so much.