

APPENDIX A WELCOMING ADDRESS

“Why Here? Why Now? / Thinking Again, and Anew, about Global Education”

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Privileged, humbled and grateful to be invited to reflect with you at this gathering, I want to begin by recognizing and thanking John Halder and Linda Korbel for their inspired and inspiring leadership. It is through their efforts, with the merger of the American Council on International Intercultural Education and Community Colleges for International Development, that a powerful, unified voice for global education in the community college has been created: CCID: An Association for Global Education. And it is with their leadership that we have returned to this place—where the sparks of understanding the critical importance of the global mission of community colleges were kindled, where passion for spreading word of that mission was nurtured.

This Center and its setting are for many of us a kind of sacred space. We have convened here in the past and, in the community created through our conversations, we have been catalysts for building understanding for and commitment to an expanded mission for community colleges. We have been called back here to think, again and anew, about global education in the twenty-first century. In the sessions that follow in the next two days, we will think and talk together about *what* we might do and *how* we should move forward. This evening, I want to focus on *why* questions. *Why* here? *Why* now. *Why* is the work we do so crucial for our colleges, our country, our world? *Why* are we compelled to respond, with

courage, with imagination, and with hope, to “the fierce urgency of now?”

Why here? I remain firmly convinced that the global perspective that informs the mission of community college in the United States is rooted and grounded in work that happened in this place. It was here that we gathered to translate the concept of mission, envisioned in the report of the Commission on the Future of Community Colleges, from idea to action. The Commission’s report, ***BUILDING COMMUNITIES: A VISION FOR A NEW CENTURY*** articulated eloquently the underlying rationale for community college involvement in a world wider than the local district, wider even than the nation.

BUILDING COMMUNITIES called for a broader and deeper understanding of community—“not a region to be served, but a climate to be created” in our classrooms, on our campuses and around the world. The report reminded us that “we are all custodians of a single planet” and although “our world may not yet be a global village . . . our sense of neighborhood must expand.” I believe that this report did much more than lend legitimacy to the global dimension of our institutional missions. At the end of the 1980’s, it enabled, encouraged, and even mandated expanded understanding of what we do and why.

Then, serendipitously or, perhaps, providentially, at the beginning of the 1990’s, the Stanley Foundation found in community colleges a desirable partner for collaborating in its mission of fostering world peace through education. The first act of the Stanley Foundation in partnership with community colleges was planning and convening a gathering of leaders in this place in late November, 1994. One of the most significant outcomes of Airlie I was the adoption of a

mission statement and the identification of strategies “to cultivate a perspective that is global” in order to shape “a globally competent citizenry.” It was surely intentional and providential that Ernest Boyer, who chaired the AACCC’s Blue-Ribbon Task Force and was the shaping spirit of its **BUILDING COMMUNITIES** report, delivered the keynote at Airlie I.

At the heart of that keynote was Boyer’s description of the commonalities that define us as human beings:

*We all share the same life cycle: we are born; we grow; we die.

*We all use symbols and make meaning through the language we use to communicate with each other.

*We all respond to the aesthetic and our souls are stirred by beauty.

*We all have the unique capacity to locate ourselves in time and space; we alone of all beings can recall the past and anticipate the future.

*We are all members of groups and institutions; we are not meant to live our lives alone.

*We all are producers and consumers; work is a part of who we are.

*We are all connected to nature.

*We all search for meaning.

Accompanying his moving statement of how we are all connected was Boyer’s expression of his quite prophetic worry about “a growing parochialism . . . that would move us back a century rather than forward to the next one. . . . [Our country] is now at the crossroads. . . . We will either rediscover our relationships globally

or develop the dangerous and sometimes fatal attitude of isolationism. This country is struggling in its own soul as to whether we are a part of the larger human community. “

The depth of Boyer’s concern was equaled by his hope in the transformative power of education. He believed passionately that “community colleges . . . educate for the next century, not the last. . . [and] are, therefore uniquely positioned to help us all better understand the implications of diversity, connectedness, and dependency.” We must be similarly committed, inspired and hopeful as we gather in a world at another crossroads.

Why now? What is different for us at this time and in this place? Massive change. Acute need. Change and need in the institutions to which we are connected and in the world in which we live.

We know that those who led our colleges and championed global education through the years since the first gathering at Airlie have retired or will do so in the not so distant future. We know that the world has changed exponentially and continues to at a speed that boggles our individual and collective imagination. We know that our fragile planet has become at once more interdependent and less hospitable to all who call it home. We know that we need to think again, and anew, about global education.

We know now, in ways we never knew before, that we are all connected—to each other, to the planet, to the universe. Our world has become, before our eyes and perhaps without our seeing, a global village. Our challenge, as I recently heard it described, is to learn to be “responsible villagers” ourselves and to enable others to be and do likewise. This is our task: educating the responsible villagers of the 21st century.

As we move toward the close of the first decade of the new millennium, we in community colleges are prepared and positioned to do such work. Our commitments transcend local and even national needs. Our environmental consciousness, our engagement in service learning, our programs in support of peace and non-violence recognize, reflect, and embody our realization that global education is essential.

As our world has been flattened and brought closer than ever by forces of globalization and at the same time torn apart by new kinds of tribalisms—(what Benjamin Barber called the forces of McWorld and Jihad), it is more imperative than ever before that we educate globally competent citizens. I want to share with you the stories of three responsible villagers who serve as powerful examples for me of the power of education to create a world worth living in.

Consider Wangari Maathai, winner of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize and founder of the Green Belt Movement. She enlisted the poorest women in her native Kenya to plant more than thirty million trees, empowering them to change their own lives. Against all odds, she created what she called a citizen education program through which her countrywomen learned, as they nurtured seeds and planted seedlings, to make connections between their own personal actions and the problems in their environment and society. Maathai led these women to share her understanding “that when the environment is destroyed, plundered, or mismanaged, our quality of life and that of future generations is undermined.”

In her Nobel acceptance speech, Maathai issued a call for global consciousness rooted in care of the earth. Having discovered for herself that responsible governance of the environment was

impossible without democratic space, she spoke in words that should inspire us:

Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system. We are called to assist the earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own. Indeed to embrace the whole creation in all its diversity, beauty, and wonder. This will happen if we see the need to revive our sense of belonging to a larger family of life . . . In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a higher level of consciousness . . . a time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now.

Next, consider Greg Mortenson, trained E.M.T. turned mountain climber and a sower of seeds of peace. You may have read his story in *Three Cups of Tea*. Restored to health after failing to reach the summit of the world’s second highest mountain, Mortenson determined to do something in return for the villagers who saved his life. He promised to return to Korphe, high in the remote reaches of the mountains between Pakistan and Afghanistan, to build a school. Since that time in 1993, Mortenson has more than kept his promise. He has built nearly 70 such schools. In the process, he learned life-changing lessons from the people he has come to love. The chief of the Korphe villagers, Haji Ali, taught Mortenson what he said was perhaps the most important lesson he ever learned:

We Americans think you have to accomplish everything quickly. We’re the country of thirty-minute power lunches and two-minute football drills. Our leaders thought their ‘shock and awe’ campaign could end the war in Iraq before it even started. Haji Ali taught me to share three cups of tea, to slow down

and make building relationships as important as building projects. He taught me that I had more to learn from the people I work with than I could ever hope to teach.

It was a lesson reinforced for Mortenson in a conversation with Pakistani General Bashir Baz who reflected on America's war on terror and the role of Osama bin Laden:

As a military man, I know you can never fight and win against someone who can shoot at you once and then run off and hide while you have to remain eternally on guard. You have to attack the source of your enemy's strength. In America's case, that's not Osama or Saddam or anyone else. The enemy is ignorance. The only way to defeat it is to build relationships with these people, to draw them into the modern world with education and business. Otherwise the fight will go on forever.

Among the most moving lessons Mortenson learned was from Haji Ali's daughter, Jahan, one of the first graduates of the first school Mortenson built with the villagers who saved and changed his life:

Before I met you, Dr. Greg, I had no idea what education was . . . But now I think it is like water. It is important for everything in life. . . Now I feel that anything is possible. . . . Mortensen realized how pleased Haji Ali would have been if he had lived long enough to see this day, to see the seed they planted together bear such splendid fruit.

Driven by his belief in the power of education and his mission to promote peace, one school at a time, Mortenson continues to build, schools that change lives and lives that change the world.

The third villager is not a Nobel Prize winner or a *New York Times* best-selling author. But like Wangari Maathai and Greg Mortenson, she knows in her bones the power of education to transform lives. Indraani Singh pilots the largest commercial Airbus jets for one of India's major airlines. It's a job she dreamed about as a child and she knows how blessed she has been to achieve her dream. The work of her life, though, is to make education available to Indian children who, were it not for her efforts, would have lives without dreams or the hope of achieving them. She started a little school outside the city of Delhi where children are clothed, loved and nourished in both body and mind. With unflagging vision, passion, and energy, Indraani has also opened the doors to learning and economic survival for women cast away by their families. She continues to change lives for the better through her persistence, advocacy, and faith in the transforming power of education.

I first learned of Indraani's work several years ago from the most senior member of the Board of Trustees of Oakton Community College. I met Indraani about a year ago when I traveled to India as a member of a delegation of six college and university presidents—representative of the different kinds of institutions in American higher education. We were invited to travel with Karen Hughes, then Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy. Our mission, as we met with leaders of education, government and business, was to demonstrate the quality and diversity of higher education and to affirm a clear commitment to international exchange of students and scholars—a commitment clouded in the post 9/11 world. Karen Hughes described our work as "waging peace." Acknowledging the enormity of the challenge we all share in rebuilding better global relations, Hughes

likened that long and good work to planting a tree under whose shade we ourselves will never sit. I believe that is an apt description for the work we are called to do at Airlie. It is a time to sow what others who come after us may reap.

In the folder of critical documents which we have been invited to review in preparation for our work together, we find the record of what has been accomplished in the past two decades. The documents can and should serve us well as we plan in a much changed present for a future that will change even more. In our world which has become a global village, each villager's fate touches all others. Like it or not, we are our brothers and our sisters keepers. Do not doubt that all of us together, as few in numbers as we are, have the capacity and the responsibility to change the world. Understanding the immensity of the task, driven by its importance, and knowing it is not ours to complete, we are compelled to commit ourselves, as those before us have done. What is at stake is what really matters—a habitable, peaceful planet which nurtures and is nurtured by all the peoples of the earth.