

**Inauguration Remarks
James Herbert
(updated 9-7-2017)**

Thank you for that lovely introduction, Chair Anderson. And to all of you who have preceded me on stage this morning, I want to extend my deepest appreciation... From the bottom of my heart... thank you for your contributions to the day's festivities. This is a momentous occasion in the life of the University of New England. And the fact that so many of you have shared so generously of your talents, wisdom, and passion makes the day even more special.

This truly is a moment that belongs to all of us. While we have gathered to celebrate my inauguration as your new president, I submit that today's festivities are about something *greater than that*. This is a celebration of us all. This is an occasion for you to give pause, to look around, and to reflect on the special role you play in our thoughtful, compassionate, committed community of

women and men. Some of you have been building this community... this amazing University... this ship, if I may use the metaphor... for decades. Others among you, including our wonderful students who are here today, have only recently devoted your talents and passion to UNE's cause. But each of you has chosen to devote yourself -- your expertise, your hard-earned talent, your precious time, and your energy -- to furthering our mission. So, this really is a day for us all, no matter how long we've been affiliated with UNE. This is a day for us to reflect with pride and satisfaction on all UNE has accomplished... This is a day for us to reflect on the special role UNE plays in students' lives, and in the lives of the various communities of which it is a part. It is also a day for us to recognize and value the special role our students play in the lives of our faculty, professional staff, and broader community. And this is a day for us to stand on this sunny lawn and gaze, alongside our fellow Nor'easters, with humble awe and boundless optimism, at

the bright blue horizon that lies beyond the shores of our wildest imaginations. This is a day for us to wonder just how much further we can take UNE... to wonder just how much more UNE, and each of us, can become during the next era of our University's evolution. As we stand and sit here together, shoulder to shoulder, as women and men drawn together from various disciplines and walks of life by a shared commitment to the values UNE holds and the mission it embraces... as we assemble today, I believe we can accomplish anything we put our collective mind to... Looking out at all of you, I truly believe that, and I know you do too.

To each of you, I say, thank you for accepting this responsibly we shoulder together... thank you for accepting this call we heed... thank you for not shying away from the challenges we face. Thank you for the role you, personally, play in pursuit of our mission. You are trustees, faculty, professional staff, administrators,

undergraduate students, graduate students, parents, friends, neighbors, alumni of UNE, and alumni of St. Francis College and Westbrook College... I also want to recognize those of you who are watching this ceremony remotely, or who will watch it later via streaming; we feel your presence here with us now. You have built this ship together... You continue to build it, with each day you spend in the classroom and office, with each time you venture into the field, or into the lab, or into the clinic... In a few minutes, I'll talk more about this ship you've built and set upon the water... But first, I'd like to recognize a few of those joining us here today.

First, let me acknowledge the love of my life, Lynn Brandsma. Lynn, you have been my partner in each step of our collective journey that has led us to this day, and I would not be standing here without your unwavering love and support. I know this job is really a joint effort in so many ways, and I love seeing how excited you've become

in embracing your own special role at UNE, especially as reflected in your interactions with students. I look forward to continuing our journey together, and to seeing all that you will do as part of the Nor'easter family. Thank you for your love, support, and partnership.

I would also like to acknowledge the rest of my immediate family. Aaron, our oldest son, who is autistic, is not able to be with us today, but I know he is here in spirit. Sylvia, thank you, and your partner Nick, for traveling from California to celebrate with us. Elliott, and mom, I am so grateful that you both were able to make the trip from Texas to be here. And Joel, thank you, too, for skipping school and being here (but you still have to finish your homework this weekend!).

(Pause while audience laughs)

I'd like to send a shout-out to Lynn's folks, Glenn and Gerry, who are watching us remotely from Iowa. To my

family, *you mean the world to me*. I am mindful of the sacrifices you too have made so that I can stand here today. I love each of you with all my heart.

I am likewise grateful to my close friends and colleagues, including my mentor and friend, John Fry, the President of Drexel University, and his lovely wife Cara, who have traveled here from far and wide to celebrate this occasion. To all of you: Your being here touches me deeply. It makes this day all the more special. Thank you.

I am also honored to welcome so many members of the UNE family who are with us today, including former presidents Danielle Ripich and Charles Ford, the current and former members of our Board of Trustees, members of the Presidential Search Committee and the Transition Committee, our deans and other senior leaders, the many delegates from other universities, and the political, civic, and business leaders from the great state of Maine, including my new friend Senator Susan Collins. I also

welcome our alumni, friends of the University, neighbors, members of our distinguished faculty, members of our professional staff, and most importantly, our students. Included in our family are the many benefactors present today who have supported UNE with their philanthropy. All you see on our campuses today has been directly influenced by their generous support. Please join me in a round of applause for all of our distinguished guests.

(Lead applause)

And finally, UNE students, in the final analysis, it is for you that we are all here.

(Lead applause)

To all of you, I express my deepest thanks for welcoming me and my family into this very special community.

“Build me straight, O worthy Master!
Stanch and strong, a goodly vessel,
That shall laugh at all disaster,
And with wave and whirlwind wrestle!”

So begins Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s “The Building of the Ship.” It so happens that as I’ve been learning more about UNE over the past half year or so, I have also been re-reading some of the works of this great Portland-born poet, who wrote so lyrically of his home state and its marriage with the sea. As I’ve immersed myself into UNE’s history and culture, I’ve come to understand more fully the aptness of the metaphor President Ripich extended when she implored you to “sail for the deep waters only.” What you’ve been building is the ship, the vessel, that can take – and indeed, already has taken -- you across some trying waters to those places where your talents and passion can make the greatest impact on the world.

In “The Building of the Ship,” the poet tells the story of a graying ship-builder and his young apprentice. They devote themselves to the ship’s construction, raising planks milled from tall Maine pines and cedar, but also from planks of chestnut, elm, and oak brought to Maine from distant shores.

As Longfellow writes:

“What a wondrous thing it is
To note how many wheels of toil
One thought, one word, can set in motion!
There’s not a ship that sails the ocean,
But every climate, every soil,
Must bring its tribute, great or small,
And help to build the wooden wall!”

Although literary critics agree that Longfellow was alluding to the creation of America’s ship of state – its union of north and south – when he wrote these lines, this coming

together for the purpose of pursuing some greater good reminded me of our own community. We are rooted in Maine but the paths that have brought us here lead back to every U.S. state and to many foreign countries.

Whether we play the part of student... faculty member... member of the professional staff... or any other role at UNE... our paths have converged and become one... Each of us has joined a larger whole... on this beautiful bluff, where the Saco River meets the Atlantic Ocean... on our stately New England quad in Portland... and at a cultural crossroads in Northern Africa. And what we do when our individual talents merge is akin to what the finished ship will do. The ship ventures back out onto the waters across which so much of its timber came, and it experiences so much more than any one piece of wood, adrift on a vast ocean, could ever experience alone.

As Longfellow tells the story of the building of the ship, he also tells the story of the master builder and his

apprentice -- the young man already marked one day to become his son-in-law. On the day the ship is completed, the young man has been promised he may take the hand of the shipbuilder's daughter. When the ship is united with the sea, the young man will be united, at last, with the young woman he loves, and who so deeply loves him.

Longfellow writes of the "fiery" youth:

"Ah, how skilful grows the hand
That obeyeth Love's command!
It is the heart, and not the brain,
That to the highest doth attain,
And he who followeth Love's behest
Far excelleth all the rest!"

Since the very beginning of the process that has led to this moment -- in which I am standing before you, addressing you as your president -- this idea of love's incredible power

as a motivator has struck me. Because I have seen it, so tangibly at play, here at UNE. Whether I was talking with members of the presidential search committee, or learning about the University from senior leaders, trustees, faculty members, students, alumni, or members of the professional staff, the love so many of you have expressed for this special community – through your words and actions – has overwhelmed me. I understand that I am not just assuming the mantle of any University, but of a very special University. I have committed myself to lead not just any University, but your University -- our University -- a University that is so central to the lives of so many people – here in Maine and on distant shores – people whose lives are touched by the vital roles UNE plays in the world.

I said earlier that I believed we could accomplish anything to which we devote ourselves fully... What makes me so sure of this?

(Pause)

The love that each of you has revealed to me... for your work... your lab... your students... your University...

(Pause)

That is what convinces me.

The recent evidence of all you accomplished during the tenure of my predecessor, Danielle Ripich, serves as a pretty convincing testimonial to just how formidable UNE has become... to just how formidable all of you have made it.

Every UNE president before me has left her or his mark on the institution, just as the presidents of our forebearer institutions in Biddeford and Portland did. For example, UNE's first president, Jack Ketchum, oversaw the merger

of St. Francis College with the New England College of Osteopathic Medicine to lay the foundation of the UNE we know today. President Charles Ford subsequently solidified the new university, and stabilized its finances while building meaningful and enduring bridges with the local community. President Thomas Hedley Reynolds expanded academic offerings, and oversaw the construction the Harold Alfond Center for Health Sciences for our health science programs and the College of Osteopathic Medicine, where we stand today. President Sandra Featherman oversaw the merger of UNE with Westbrook College, creating the then College of Health Professions, which now is the Westbrook College of Health Professions, on our Portland campus. And most recently, President Danielle Ripich led UNE through a period of truly transformational development. I am grateful for all that these pioneering leaders have done to build the great institution that UNE is today. Danielle, Sandra, and Charles, I am so happy that you are able to be with us

today. Thank you for all you have done to shape UNE's destiny.

(Lead applause)

I am especially grateful to Danielle for her guidance and friendship during my transition over the past several months. Danielle stood before you, as I do today, in 2006. She was brimming with optimism about where UNE could go. Shortly after her inauguration, the storm clouds of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression began to swirl in the sky. What followed was a challenging time for institutions of higher education. But Danielle, her leadership team, and many of you gathered here today who worked beside them, refused to blink. With steady hands and unflinching resolve, you focused your efforts, and you kept UNE on the path that transformed it from a small, regional institution into a thriving, modern, global University. And, step by step, UNE became just that... a thriving world-class University.

As many other colleges and universities tried simply to ride out the Great Recession, many of you in attendance today set yourselves to building the ship. You created new academic buildings, residence halls, and athletic facilities... new colleges... a campus in Morocco... new centers of excellence... new academic programs... and much, much more. In so doing, you fashioned an identity for UNE. You built a national -- and even international -- reputation for it. You connected its longstanding expertise in educating students for the health professions with an emphasis on the liberal arts. You designed innovative online programs that enroll students from around the globe. You invested in the humanities, and devoted yourselves to bolstering UNE's programs in the marine sciences, environmental sciences, social sciences, education, business, and other essential fields.

Many of you here today worked long hours and made many sacrifices, I know. And the results speak for

themselves. UNE's enrollment stands at more than 12,000 students. Our economic impact on the state of Maine exceeds a billion dollars per year. Our six colleges supply the Maine workforce with steady streams of professionals in high-demand fields... professionals who enter their jobs with demonstrable skills, cultural fluency, global awareness, and a sound foundation in the liberal arts. Our centers of excellence combine the talents of faculty members and students from across disciplines to make important advancements in burgeoning fields. Our academic programs offer more opportunities than ever before for students to learn and grow. Our investigators make groundbreaking discoveries and engage in high impact scholarship. Our faculty and students enjoy important relationships with industry... relationships that position students for success both during their time with us and after they graduate.

UNE today has a strong balance sheet, a global presence, and a robust student body. *You have built an incredible ship.*

(Pause)

It will be my honor to devote the whole of my being to guiding it, with this amazing crew... *(gesturing to crowd)* ... to those places where we may best realize our mission.

(Pause for applause)

At UNE, we express our mission succinctly with the five simple words: *Innovation... for a Healthier... Planet...*

What does it mean to be *innovative*? UNE demonstrates to Maine, and indeed to the wider world, what it means. In our teaching, our scholarship, and our service to our communities, we have been inventive, pioneering, and bold. To experiment with pedagogies that cut across traditional disciplinary boundaries... to engage in research

that challenges long-standing assumptions in our fields... to use new technologies in ways they are not yet being widely applied... we must possess a certain degree of courage. We must accept the inevitable pitfalls along the way that are endemic to the creative process. We must be self-reflective and open to criticism, but unbowed when the naysayers – the upholders of tradition for tradition's sake -- insist that we should just do it, teach it, or see it the way it's always been. We must be persistent... dogged... resolute... We must be brave. And UNE has shown itself to be all these things.

We innovate not for innovation's sake, of course. And we do not fetishize innovation at the price of neglecting the hard work of maintaining the proven fruits of our prior work. Rather, we innovate strategically. We don't try to be all things to all people, but, strategically we devote ourselves to devising new approaches to challenges in

areas where our strengths and resources align with the world's needs.

We innovate in the pursuit of a healthier planet. The health of individuals is our concern, as well as the health of communities and the environments in which they exist. We view the well-being of the one as inextricably linked to the well-being of the many... and linked to the health of the environment – its air, water, and diverse ecosystems. We also acknowledge the vital role of the arts, humanities, and social sciences to promoting health and well-being. These diverse fields contribute in countless ways to enriching our quality of life and promoting human welfare.

Rather than focusing our efforts only at the local level, merely endeavoring to address the effects of rising sea levels or of an aging population as they pertain to Maine, we make the whole planet our concern. We send our students to Morocco, Spain, France, Iceland, and points elsewhere around the globe, preparing them for lives and

careers in a rapidly shrinking world. While expanding their horizons in this way, we simultaneously serve the world's needs... the world that is hungry for the types of solutions we imagine... hungry for the types of broadminded leaders our students will become. When we share our cutting-edge approach to interprofessional education at national conferences – espousing the virtues of interdisciplinary practice in health care and health care education, or when we bring to one of our campuses an international authority on the Arab-Israeli conflict to discuss how peace might yet be attainable in the Middle East, we are making the entire planet our concern.

So here we find ourselves, subscribing to this ambitious mission... afloat in our ready vessel. And now we must ask ourselves, where do we want to take our ship? Where do we need to take it? How do we get it there? How might this ship be improved for its journey given what we have experienced already? And how do we ensure that our ship

remains seaworthy in the face of uncertain and often treacherous waters before us?

You have chosen me to set our course and guide our ship, and although I have some clear ideas about those seas that lie ahead and how we should tack them, I want you to know that I intend to consider all of your perspectives as we move forward together. I have spent the past two months meeting as many of you as possible, learning more about your individual roles in making UNE the special institution it is, and learning how you believe the University can best achieve its mission. And I intend to spend more time engaging in this “listening and learning” tour. Consider it my own little journey around the deck and quarters of our ship. All of your voices are guiding me, along with the Board of Trustees and my leadership team, as we draft a new strategic plan. By collaborating, we will best achieve our collective mission.

I do, of course, already have some rather concrete ideas about our rapidly-changing world... our world that is being revolutionized, day-by-day, minute-by-minute, by technological innovation, automation, and the other forces currently destabilizing so many of our social, political, and cultural institutions. And I have some ideas about what UNE must do in order to prosper amidst this challenging climate.

The world is changing. And its needs are changing. Look at how we work and play, and consider how quickly these changes are occurring. Consider that on the day just eleven years ago when the mantle of UNE presidency was last passed from one person to the next -- from Sandra to Danielle – the iPhone was still a year away from being introduced to market. MySpace was shrugging off the threat posed by an upstart social networking site known as “the Facebook.” There was no such thing as “streaming” Netflix... or Uber... or self-driving cars... or an iPad... or a

Keurig K-Cup. Back then, Amazon sold books, but not too many. It was working on something call a Kindle, which would not come out until more than a year after Danielle took office.

At a pace never seen before in human history, we have been inventing new technologies and assimilating them into our daily lives. We have been adapting and evolving as individuals and as members of larger social structures. Higher education has been... and is being... disrupted. And why shouldn't it be? Every other facet of how we live, communicate, and learn has been. Why should our domain be immune? Institutions of higher education have been notoriously slow to change. Fortunately, this hasn't been so much the case at UNE, where we have been far more nimble than most of our peers in the face of these developments. As a result, we have seen our stock and reputation rise in myriad ways.

Generally speaking, though, higher education has spent the past decade just scrambling to keep up. We must do better. To remain relevant and to prosper in the face of this ongoing revolution, universities must acknowledge and address head on the changes that are occurring. We must evolve along with the world. And we must confront a variety of interrelated challenges.

One challenge that is not going to subside anytime soon is the shift in demographics. As a country, the United States is growing older. This is particularly acute here in Maine. As our population ages, the pool of prospective high school graduates from which we recruit students continues to shrink. To remain vibrant, institutions of higher education must cast our nets more broadly, welcoming more students from diverse backgrounds. We must attract more first-generation college students... students like I was more years ago than I care to recount, when I first stepped foot onto a college campus.

Institutions must not only attract these students, we must support them and position them to succeed. We must meet their needs academically and socially as they make the transition to college life, and beyond.

Fortunately, UNE's institutional spirit is an inclusive one. We have a proud history of making education accessible to members of marginalized groups. In the 1800s, our charter institution, Westbrook College, was welcoming women to its classrooms when the doors of most institutions of higher learning were closed to them. Likewise, Westbrook College admitted African-Americans and other minorities when slavery still existed south of the Mason-Dixon Line. Here, in Biddeford, the high school that would become St. Francis College, and later UNE, welcomed the children of Franco-American immigrants, who worked long hours in the nearby mills. These were first generation students, many of whom spoke exclusively French at home. Here, on our Biddeford Campus, they gained the knowledge and

skills to lead successful, meaningful lives. To this day, we attract many first-generation students. And we attract many students from diverse backgrounds. But we can and must do better.

Another challenge we face as a higher education community lies in the tension between ensuring that traditionally marginalized groups feel welcome on our campuses and that they have a strong voice, while also maintaining the academy's steadfast commitment to free speech and robust debate. We must not stifle those whose opinions run counter to current social norms or prevailing codes of political correctness. We must ensure that the academy plays its vital, time-tested role as the ultimate open marketplace of ideas. Our campuses must be places where bad ideas are not censored but are instead countered with better ideas. At the same time, we must strive to ensure that the loudest voices do not deprive platforms to others, and particularly to those students

taking their first uncertain steps into a world previously closed off to them.

Indeed, now more than ever, we all need exposure to thoughtful, dissenting perspectives. The loudest, shrillest voices these days speak from predictable, orthodox positions staked out at far ends of the ideological spectrum. As our media becomes more polarized and our newsfeeds become self-created bubbles that admit only those perspectives with which we already agree, we must make room for, and indeed encourage, those from outside our self-selected camps to voice their opinions, and in so doing, to complicate our thinking. We must become free-thinkers who resist the tendencies of our society's evolving communication modes to simplify and unify our thinking. And, even more challengingly, we must encourage our students – who have never known a world without a newsfeed and who have come of age tailoring their communications to 142 characters or less -- to

become free and critical thinkers... to become deep thinkers...

At the same time that we aspire to achieve these high ideals, we must ensure that our programs have demonstrable practical value to our students. With each freshman class we recruit, return on investment becomes a bigger and bigger consideration in the decision-making of students and their parents. Fortunately, UNE does a good job of continuously reinventing itself, of developing new programs and redesigning existing ones to meet current – and expected future – workforce needs. But as the pace of change accelerates and its effects become less predictable, the ability to align educational programs with market needs becomes more challenging. The increased scrutiny of higher education's value proposition is not going to diminish; it is going to intensify. And it is going to do so at a time when automation and globalization fundamentally reshape – or even eliminate -- many of the

familiar workplaces we currently take for granted as reliable settings where our graduates find good-paying jobs that enable them to lead rewarding, meaningful lives. As our reliance on technology increases, our workforce and economy will continue to change... radically. Entire disciplines will struggle to remain relevant, and will either evolve to play new roles in the landscape created by this third industrial revolution, or will wither beneath the cold glare of technology's indifferent gaze to become anachronisms of a dying world.

Although it may not be obvious at first, I believe that deep engagement with the liberal arts -- with the study of history, philosophy, literature, political theory, arts and related domains -- will become even more critical as we navigate this new era. In addition to their intrinsic value in enriching our lives, the liberal arts inculcate habits of mind -- such as the value of transdisciplinary thinking, healthy skepticism, intellectual curiosity and humility, problem-

solving in the face of the unknown, and lifelong learning – habits of mind that certainly will become even more vital to both personal success and effective civic engagement. We must find ways to ensure that our students benefit from the deep thinking -- the critical thinking -- that is at the heart of the liberal arts. And we must do this in a way that embraces new technologies rather than standing in futile, quixotic resistance against them.

So, these are the challenges. These are the winds that churn the waters that rock our boat... and will rock it, increasingly, in the years ahead. These exponentially accelerating developments are the growing storm being blown across the bow of our ship. We can view these gales as daunting challenges. We can accept that not only UNE but all institutions of higher education will be shaken by the destabilizing, recalibrating, leveling gusts of this tempest. Or, we can choose to think differently about these winds and to think differently about the resulting

choppy waters. A poet, whose identity remains anonymous, once wrote, “A smooth sea never made a skillful mariner, neither do uninterrupted prosperity and success qualify for usefulness and happiness. The storms of adversity, like those of the ocean, rouse the faculties, and excite the invention, prudence, skill and fortitude of the voyager.”

The larger world of higher education may or may not choose to view this storm as an opportunity. But UNE can, and together, we will.

I firmly believe that UNE is well-poised to play a leadership role in the world of higher education in the decades ahead. We are a community that stands on a foundation of strong core values. We know who we are, and know what we want to be. We have a firm identity. We are entrepreneurial of spirit. We will look into the future, facing squarely whatever headwinds may blow our way, and anticipating coming realities in order to adjust our

course and remain one step ahead of them. I believe that our deep expertise in the natural and applied sciences will serve us well in the years ahead, as will our eagerness to cross disciplinary bounds to collaborate with others, both within and beyond our community. Our unwavering commitment to the social sciences and humanities will be vital; the light they shed on the human condition will be critical to our self-understanding, and by extension, to our sense of well-being as we continue to evolve.

Facing these challenges will require teamwork. This is another reason I know UNE is well-positioned to succeed. Since my arrival, I have been struck repeatedly by just how helpful and selfless this community is. We are a family deeply focused on the central reason for our existence: the education of students. Our students will carry forth the knowledge and values they gain here. And they will make very real contributions to the disciplines we hold dear.

As he concludes his poem, Longfellow's words reflect our own steadfast commitment to face, with unflinching resolve, whatever headwinds may arise:

“Sail forth into the sea, O ship!
Through wind and wave, right onward steer!
The moistened eye, the trembling lip,
Are not the signs of doubt or fear.
Sail forth into the sea of life,
O gentle, loving, trusting wife,
And safe from all adversity
Upon the bosom of that sea
Thy comings and thy goings be!
For gentleness and love and trust
Prevail o'er angry wave and gust;
And in the wreck of noble lives
Something immortal still survives!”

I am deeply honored and humbled to stand with you today as, together, we embark on the next chapter in the life of this amazing University.

Thank you all.