

Tuesday 29th August 2006.

Dear President Sister Francesca, Sister Maureen, Dr. Regina Hobough, and fellow colleagues,

Good morning!

I was invited to reflect upon our University Mission for this opening ceremony. Thank you for this honor!

I would like to begin with a scene from one of my favorite movies, “The Wizard of Oz.” Dorothy and her newly found family, the Scarecrow, the Tin-man, and the Lion, have entered the Wizard’s chamber. Toto (Dorothy’s dog) unveils a man standing behind a curtain – it happens to be the wizard. A dialogue results between Dorothy and the wizard, which ends with Dorothy saying: “You are a very bad man.” The wizard replies: “I am a good man, but just a bad wizard.” Dorothy replies, “But you promised....” The wizard does then give the Scarecrow a diploma, the Tin-man a heart, and the Lion a medal.

Throughout the film, Dorothy is accepting of her newly found family. Dorothy exemplifies selflessness, putting the needs of others ahead of her own.

I strongly feel that you would agree with the old folk wisdom that “actions speak louder than words.” As members of the University we have the responsibility and privilege to be role models for our students. Our students are or will become leaders in their own families, communities, and perhaps even internationally. Their background may be very humble like that of Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi was a very shy man who did not participate in any extra-curricular activities. It was when he was 18 that he read the newspaper for the first time. However, slowly but surely under the guidance of his teacher/guru, he rose to become one of the greatest leaders that this world has ever witnessed.

On a similar note, we should be accepting of our students and affirm self respect to them, accepting them as they are and contributing to and nurturing their growth. In my short tenure here thus far, I have witnessed that my immediate colleagues uphold our University’s mission. I have observed their interactions with our students and the University community. They do live the mission. They are selfless, they are role models, and their interactions speak louder than words. I have seen that they possess a plethora of attributes. For example, they are challenging yet supportive, demanding of excellence yet patient in its pursuit, and they nurture critical, logical, and creative thinking. I am inspired by their actions.

I encourage all of us to continue to practice acceptance of our students (e.g. their learning styles, backgrounds, strengths, needs, etc.) and to treat them non-judgmentally. For as Mahatma Gandhi said, “The only true gift is a piece of yourself.” This is imperative because we are responsible for our legacy. If we can uphold the values of our University Mission, then we have left our students with a lovely gift – our first-class legacy.

Thank you very much!

Dr. Kishore K. Bagga.