

Inauguration Remarks: Timothy M. Downs

November 10, 2016

Thank You:

Thank you all for attending this event, an event that I am grateful to experience!

I would like to thank: The SDBOR, Dr. Mike Rush, members of the search committee, and the NSU campus community for selecting me as the 17th President of Northern!

As an educational professional I am thankful to have worked with and learned from countless colleagues, especially the three colleagues who just spoke on my behalf. Thank you, Bobby, Father Michael, and Kevin!

I am especially thankful for a supportive family, friends, former students, colleagues, and, of course, my wife Mary.

Theme: “Pathways to Success”

My remarks today focus on my philosophy of assisting students to succeed; more specifically helping them to identify their own pathways to success, academically and in preparation for fulfilling lives.

Prior to exploring my philosophy, I would like to give you a short synopsis of my life and career:

- Grew up in a home with four boys; as the youngest. This led me to develop good survival skills!
- When I was three I was run over by an ice cream truck, almost killing me if it hadn't been for my Uncle Joe's CPR skills as a former lifeguard. Sorry, to my brother Pat for ruining your birthday party!
- I was afraid of the ice cream man, for a while, but overcame that phobia, because I really like ice cream!
- In our youth we were always encouraged to equally study and play, thanks to our parents.

- I was a student-athlete in high school and the first two years of college but then focused on my studies while I worked full-time the last three years of college.
- Yes, your math is correct, I took five years to complete a bachelor's degree!
- Graduate school was not planned, originally, but my advisor convinced me to pursue my studies full-time.
- Thanks to Drs. Tim Plax and Pat Kearney for this encouragement and to Dr. James C. McCroskey for accepting me to WVU.
- Dr. McCroskey was born and raised in SD, received degrees from Southern State Teachers College (USD-Springfield) and USD (MA) and taught high school and debate in Scotland and Watertown, SD, prior to receiving his doctorate from Penn State.
- So, my lineage includes immense influence from a native South Dakotan!
- My master's at WVU and doctorate at The University of Oklahoma led me to pursue a career in higher education, again, not my original plan!
- As a doctoral student I was taught and mentored by Dr. Jon Nussbaum, a phenomenal scholar-teacher! Jon is not here today due to receiving an award for lifetime achievement at the National Communication conference today.
- My first job as a faculty member at CSU-LA was the starting point of my career; CSLA is an institution that truly makes a difference in the lives of students! My career was shaped by my students, students dedicated and motivated to learn.

My Philosophy: Assisting Students is Our Mission

- As a faculty member I always tried to assist students, however possible.
- Students are the reason why universities exist; their success is imperative to our success as institutions.
- Not all students are fully prepared to succeed in college; that's okay, I know I was a "work-in-progress" when I was an undergraduate student.
- Helping students to identify their strengths and areas for development has always been my passion; for example, allowing students to re-do assignments in order to refine their knowledge and skills.

- I am honored today that two of my students are present: Thank you Regina and Brian for being here. Your accomplishments make me proud.

As educators we focus on the outcomes of teaching and student development:

- Watching students mature both intellectually and as young adults is very rewarding!
- The goal for me was to see my students prepared to pursue jobs, develop a career path, be lifelong learners, and to become exemplary citizens and leaders.
- This should be the goal of education---preparing our next generations to be the leaders of tomorrow.
- Selfishly, I love seeing this happen because I know that when I retire the generations of students we have collectively prepared for their futures will be excellent leaders of companies, communities, and our country.
- So, I always frame the educational process as helping students to find their “pathways to success”. This has been my commitment as an educator, which is most important to me, because students are our most important investment in the success of our collective future.
- This process takes time and a commitment from both the faculty member and the student, but the outcomes of success are well worth the time and energy required!
- I am proud knowing that the faculty and staff of Northern do an outstanding job in preparing our students to succeed; thank you for all of these efforts to help our students to seek opportunities that change their lives!

As a pre-eminent leader and intellectual the late Abraham Lincoln was sought out as a teacher and mentor by numerous aspiring law students. Today’s program includes a quote from a letter written by Lincoln to an aspiring student of law, Isham Reavis; Lincoln’s letter states:

“Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed, is more important than any other one thing.”

Lincoln’s message was communicated to encourage Mr. Reavis’ studies; reminding him that his own motivation and persistence is the essential factor to

his own success, in life and as an attorney. I have always found the insights and wisdom of Lincoln to be compelling and agree wholeheartedly that our own motivations, along with some assistance and guidance, have every potential to yield successful outcomes. Given the number of unsuccessful attempts in politics of President Lincoln I think he is an excellent case study for persistence and grit, characteristics that have led individuals and our country to many positive outcomes.

Our Country, the United States of America, is described as a land of opportunity:

- Allows people to pursue their dreams ... and I believe we should all be afforded these opportunities.
- Our nation provides freedoms and opportunities to pursue learning; universities such as Northern State exist to provide our citizens with the opportunity to pursue a college degree.
- As a product of public education, three times, I firmly believe in Northern's mission of teaching, research and service; I know our faculty and staff do an exceptional job educating and preparing students for life—again, thank you!
- Today's musical selections serve as reminders of the great heritage of our country. Something I think we should be mindful of, every day.
- This is not an accident since tomorrow is Veterans' Day, a day dedicated to thanking all of those who have served or are presently serving to protect our nation and our constitutional rights.
- At this time, would all those who have or continue to serve our great nation please rise and be recognized?
- As a new resident of the State of South Dakota my values very much resonate with those of the people in SD; I am pleased to be a resident of South Dakota.
- Of course, I am proud of our nation and know that as educators we will continue to prepare students to lead our communities and country toward peace and prosperity in the future.

As I bring my remarks to a close, I make the following Pledge

As the 17th President of Northern State University I pledge to be:

- The Chief Advocate and Ambassador for Northern State University.
- A staunch advocate for the development of people, programs and opportunities that assist in the development of all students.
- An ambassador for Aberdeen and the region we serve.
- A tireless administrator who will work with his colleagues to develop programs and projects that advance Northern.
- A person who accepts feedback from colleagues, students and citizens; using this information to enhance my performance as president and the future successes of Northern.

In closing, I would like to thank:

All of you for attending today's inauguration.

Thank those individuals making welcoming remarks, those providing greetings, and our three speakers, three people who mean a great deal to me personally and professionally.

I would especially like to thank:

- The Inauguration Planning Committee, with special thanks to Lisa Grote, Amy Blackstone, Susan Bostian, and my favorite person in the world, Mary Downs.
- The NSU Symphonic Band, under the direction of Dr. Rolf Olson.
- The NSU Concert Choir, under the direction of Dr. Timothy Woods.
- Dr. Darci Bultema, Associate Professor of Music and Ms. Katie Cramer (PFC, Army Reserves; alum, NSU) --- for their exceptional vocal performances!

Again, thank you for entrusting in me the responsibility of serving as Northern's 17th President.

I am honored and will work tirelessly to assure our many successes in the future!