

Inauguration Address

Dr. James D. Ball

November 7, 2014

Thank you all for being here today and for sharing with me the most important day of my professional life and the third most important day in the history of the college. We gather to recognize the important role of leadership and we reaffirm the mission of this college.

We celebrate our students past and present. We honor the vital role that educators play as we help learners see what gems lie hidden from view, and teach them to pluck those gems for their own.

To set the stage for my address, we must understand what a college president does, for it provides important context. So, for that answer, our Early Childhood Education Students asked the little ones in our Child Development Center...“What does a college president do?” A few of the precious answers were:

- I never heard of that before
- He puts people not in the wars
- He makes kids better and not sick anymore.
- He goes on a big airplane and has a suit
- A college president only has to do half the work because they are lucky.

And my favorite:

- He be in charge...that's all.

From the mouths of babes!

And now a few thank you's are in order...

A great deal of effort has gone into making this an extraordinary day. Thank you Karen Merkle, Alan Schuman and the many individuals who worked so hard to make this event one that my family and I, and this college, will never forget.

It is crucial that I recognize and thank all of you here for your role in helping me progress to this point in my career. Almost everyone in this room has impacted me by your hard work, friendship and support over the

years. The platform, built from your collective contributions, is that which I stand upon today.

To our distinguished guests on stage, to our faculty and staff, to our elected officials, and dignitaries from sister colleges, and to my friends and family, thank you very much for your support and for attending. It is humbling beyond words to see you all here.

In taking the helm as president I am able to benefit from the superb leadership provided to the college by Presidents Emeriti, Dr. Joseph Shields and Dr. Faye Pappalardo. Sadly we lost Dr. Shields, the founding president of the college last year; though, we are privileged to have Dr. Faye Pappalardo with us on stage today.

To Joe and to Faye, I say thank you. I will endeavor always to maintain a culture of caring, excellence and passion that you along with the Board of Trustees established here at Carroll.

We have a wonderful Board of Trustees. Thank you for entrusting me. Know that I will work constantly to bring honor to the college and to keep your trust.

Thank you, Dave O'Callaghan, for your wisdom and your warm expression of support. And congratulations on your recent retirement from Northrop Grumman.

And thank you Barbara Charnock for serving as convener today. You are quite a natural!

I also want to recognize Dr. Walter Bumphus, president and CEO of the American Association of Community Colleges. Walter, it was an honor to have worked with you at Howard. Thank you for hiring me and getting me started in my career. You honor us by your presence today.

My family is a source of immeasurable pride. My extended family is all here, and you met my niece Bailey and my daughters Jessica and Jillian. Thank you all for your love and support!

My wife Marie is my soul, my love, my most ardent supporter, and my deepest devotion. To you Marie, I owe everything.

I would like also to recognize our highly effective executive team, the vice presidents who join me on stage today. I am very fortunate to work with this

competent and hardworking group as well as with their respective administrative and support staff teams. All of our staff members in Continuing Education and Training, Administrative Services, Planning Marketing and Assessment, and the Foundation Office contribute mightily to our students and to the success of this college.

Having served as Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs for 15 years, I had the privilege of leading an astounding faculty and student affairs staff who collaborate as one unified team....and I do mean astounding.

Our ability to be transformational in student's lives rests with our faculty (full and part-time, credit and non-credit), and our student affairs and instructional support areas. They come through with exceptional commitment. In all sincerity, you are my heroes.

To the entire staff at Carroll Community College, I say thank you. It is a rare privilege to be able to lead such an outstanding group of individuals.

Based on my childhood and public school years, my siblings are probably a tad flummoxed to see me upon this stage. Growing up, I was the classic music jock and academic underachiever. I undertook a flight path that hovered just below the radar. My approach to school had a certain, shall I say, economy of effort... I did what was necessary to get by in school.

When I got to college, a new world opened. I learned that I was limited only by personal expectations and my dreams. That metamorphosis continues to fuel my passion for the transformative power of higher education.

Therefore, today, we reaffirm our mission to be a vibrant and innovative center of higher-learning for our community, with all of the contexts associated with the term higher learning.

Higher education serves as a catalyst for individual change and achievement. It facilitates the process of interpreting and transferring knowledge. It helps individuals discover talents and develop new skills.

Community colleges are at the hub of higher education, enrolling well over half of all undergraduates. We serve a wide-spectrum of students. We take them from where they are as learners and expertly guide them to achieve at a higher level, whether they enter needing a little help or they enter having completed prior college degrees. Serving a broad range of students is quite a challenge, and one of great import. This community's college, stands as a beacon of promise and hope. We are democracy's college.

A few student stories say it all:

Mary Jo Piarote's college career started at the age of 47 in our Education Program. She quickly earned recognition for outstanding achievement. Mary Jo says: "I had many doubts as to whether I could be successful at college and teaching. I would like to thank college faculty and administrators for believing in my potential. To be recognized (with an award) boosted my confidence and inspired me to continue to receive my bachelor's degree". Mary Jo completed her AAT degree as well as her bachelor's degree in Elementary

Education and is currently employed by Baltimore County Public Schools as a special educator.

Chris Bradford turned a STEM Academic Community event into an internship, and ultimately into employment with an engineering firm while he attends school. He now receives tuition assistance and gains valuable experience as he completes his AA, and ultimately his BS in Engineering.

Jack Gurecki, a Computer Graphic Design student, is the featured artist in our exhibit located in the Babylon Great Hall where we will have our reception. His solo exhibit features his art in through which he interprets his own musical compositions. Jack is a superb example of the modern multidisciplinary learner who is absolutely fueled by the use of technology as a learning tool, a creative tool, and a primary channel for self-expression.

Wayne Jones came to Carroll to prepare to enter a physician's assistant program, after completing his Baccalaureate degree in Psychology. He tells me that attending Carroll is the best decision he ever made in

pursuit of his higher education. That is so because of the care and support of his faculty. Perhaps that is also due to Wayne's participation on campus as an officer in the Carroll Community College's Chapter of the American Chemical Society.

These and other stories like them are foremost in my mind as I step into the presidency at Carroll. They represent the profound responsibility we have to be catalysts for the good in the lives of our students.

Would the students I just mentioned please stand and be recognized?

Our students tell us we are on the right track. But we cannot be self-satisfied or complacent in our successes. Community colleges and all of higher education, as Bernie Sandusky referenced in his remarks, face unprecedented challenges. We face a precarious future related to information ubiquity and emerging technologies that are disrupting the role of higher education.

In their recent report: *Unsettling Times: Higher Education in an Era of Change*, a futurist panel assembled by the University of Denver, observed:

“Information, now a global commodity, is accessible to large swaths of the world’s population... Information is everywhere, used for almost everything and available to much of the world’s population, often at little or no cost. The fact that anyone can produce content lends to a seemingly endless supply. Detailed information on almost any topic... is instantly available to anyone over the Internet. Information is no longer the private treasure owned by scholars.”

Indeed, as we look ahead, we find concern over a multitude of emerging forces that challenge higher education. To name a few disruptive issues:

- High cost of attaining the baccalaureate. By some estimates, costs have risen two fold since 2003/2004
- Changing demographics yielding more diversification and declining enrollments

- **More colleges and other entities competing for fewer students**
- **Competitors offering disruptive solutions and challenging our traditions, practices, and pricing**
- **Loss of public trust in education**

To be sure, the river ahead for higher education will be turbulent, but this is not a time to retract. This is a time to be innovative and to create our own disruptive answers.

In this context we can learn much from two quotes: 1) *“every system is exquisitely designed to yield the results it delivers.”* (source uncertain); and, *“the definition of irrationality is applying the same solution to the same problem and expecting a different result.”* (Albert Einstein).

Together, these ideas point to the need to disrupt our own thinking and redesign our approaches.

Carroll Community College is well-positioned to ride the approaching rapids. We offer multiple avenues for access and we respond quickly to community needs. We are half the cost of University System institutions and

thus make the combined cost of a baccalaureate much more affordable.

We have been re-engineering, modularizing courses, and implementing high-impact practices appealing to student's need for hands on, problem based learning.

Our future focus is sharp. With the help of grant funds and cost containment strategies we are launching new programs in key areas for Maryland, such as Cyber Security. Our Engineering and STEM programs are growing nicely.

We are refining current partnerships such as those with business and industry, the Carroll County Office of Economic Development, and our jointly operated facility for Health Care Education at Mt. Airy (with sister colleges Howard and Frederick).

We are reexamining instructional costs and expanding use of predictive analytics in decision-making. We are closely monitoring performance and restructuring systems to support student success and completion. We continue to involve stakeholders in helping to shape our programs.

This is challenging and invigorating work. There is much to be proud of at Carroll Community College. We have earned distinction nationally for many things, including innovation in curriculum, and for our approach to assessment of student performance.

Student performance is improving. Our retention and transfer completion rates are consistently among the highest in Maryland and well above national averages.

As we move from this theatre into our future, I want our students, and our community to know that we are a tremendous investment in the quality of life for our citizens. We will continue to be a center that imbues integrity, results, and responsibility.

Therefore, to our students we pledge absolute commitment to creating an engaging and active learning environment, from which you will be well-prepared for continued pursuits.

We implore you to invest in yourselves. We expect that you will complete what you have started and will do so as quickly as your life circumstances allow.

To our community, we pledge our sustained focus on quality, continuous improvement of student outcomes, and we will continue to contribute to workforce preparation and economic development.

To our elected officials who assure a portion of our funding, we pledge our full partnership. We understand fiscal pressures and will continue to be careful stewards of our resources. We ask you to continue to invest in Carroll County students so that they can better invest in themselves.

We ask for continued support from our donor community and pledge that your giving will always be used to support student access and success.

Today I have spoken of our mission, what we do as higher educators and our passion for our work. I have spoken of challenges ahead, our successes, and our future direction.

I step away from this stage energized by this wonderful, if not overwhelming, showing of support. And among the expressions of support was a letter of encouragement from Delaine Hobbs of our Board of

Trustees in which he wrote: “don’t take too much advice, keep at the helm, steer your own ship.”

However, during the course of the last few days, I received some advice worth sharing:

When asked “What should the president do to make the college better?” our littlest learners said:

- ***“Make sure to help others” – check, wise indeed.***
- ***“Clean up so ants don’t come”...also check.***
- ***“Give students less work”... excuse me?***
- ***“Put a pool, massage room and rest areas in the back of the school for students who are in there for their whole life!”... hum, must be the child of a student.***

And my favorite...

- ***“Say thank you all the time”... wise indeed!***

Thank you one and all for attending today. You do me great honor as we celebrate our mission, our students, and our passion for being Carroll’s Community College.
