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Promises to Keep: Chancellor Sam Schuman's remarks during the Capital Campaign Defining Moment celebration August 11, 2003

Summary:

(September 3, 2003)-The University of Minnesota has appropriately titled its all-campus capital campaign “A Defining Moment.” If I were asked to name the UMM section of the endeavor though, I would have picked a different name. I think I would have chosen a line from the most famous poem written in America and called it “Promises to keep.”

The woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I have promises to keep
And miles to go before I sleep
And miles to go before I sleep.

Frost’s poem is a lovely little piece, and one that I don’t think has been cheapened by its universal popularity.

At UMM, we have promises to keep.

Promises to our past. Promises to the ideals of the Sisters of Mercy who created this campus in 1887 and to their mission to serve the native American young people of this area, a mission we still honor, and which still honors us, albeit in very very different form. Promises to the practicality and regional service of the West Central School of Agriculture that lived here from 1910 to 1960 and taught Minnesota farm girls and boys to feed the world. And promises to the founders of UMM, who had the audacity to imagine a liberal arts college in Morris which would be of uncompromising academic rigor and undiluted purpose and promises to the first four decades of students, faculty and staff who invested years of their life to make that heroic vision a reality.

Promises to our present. To the students of today, who are good enough to deserve the very best of teaching, services and facilities. Who needed a state of the art Science center, and a top quality renovation of the Social Science building. To the faculty who pour their hearts and minds and spirits into their teaching and scholarship and who need the support to make that effort as productive and effective as it deserves to be. To the hard-working, skilled and prideful staff who manage this place with efficiency and keep it running smoothly.

But most of all, promises to the future. The need for the kind of liberating education we offer at this college grows every year. The need for informed, thoughtful, independent and creative citizens of the region, nation and world has never been higher, and it will continue to grow. UMM, and the few places good enough to be like us, have been important yesterday, but we will be essential tomorrow. I truly believe that education is the best hope of the world, and that nobody does it better than the University of Minnesota, Morris.

In the past half-dozen years, we have seen our campus recognized as a national historical treasure, a living museum of the history of education in West Central Minnesota. We have seen \$50 million in campus improvements, culminating in

the allocation of funds to renovate Social Science. And we have seen UMM make its case for philanthropy in a way that no one could have imagined.

Today, it seems unbelievable that when the U of MN foundation assessed our gift potential at the start of the capital campaign, it suggested a goal of \$2,000,000 as realistic. I remember, as do Maddy and others, impassioned debates on campus as to whether that was overly ambitious. And I remember some who were incredulous when the Campaign steering committee set a goal which tripled that estimate, and announced a \$6 million effort. We made the \$6 million with 18 months to go, and had the time and taste for more, so we took one more deep breath and kept going, straight against the current of a faltering economy. Today, we announce a final campaign total of over \$9.5 million. We found support at a level 4 1/2 times greater than the professionals thought we would.

As we celebrate these breathtaking accomplishments, there are many individuals and groups who merit recognition, starting with all of you who are here this evening because you have made significant contributions to the campaign, the funding of the social science building renovation or the achievement of historic district status for the campus core. The campaign was able to engage the generosity of 23 donors of over \$100,000, 10 who made gifts in excess of \$250,000 and five at the level of giving over \$500,000. We cannot thank enough the campaign volunteers who gave unstintingly of their leadership, especially co-chairs John Dayton and Bob Gandrud. Maddy Maxeiner and the skilled, dedicated staff in external relations did so much of the work that made it all happen. And, paired effectively with those fund raisers are the legislators and civic volunteers who never lost faith that our facilities needs, especially in the old social science building would be met. And our gratitude goes to Lowell Rasmussen, Sue Granger and all those who worked to make the historic district designation come about. Tom Mahoney and our Grants Development department brought about a million dollars of Sponsored Program funding into the College in during this effort. Let's give all these contributors – let's give YOU all – the ovation you deserve.

We are keeping and are going to keep our promises to the past, present and future. Our students will have good buildings, our professors will be supported, our staff aided and acknowledged, our historic campus recognized. Funds from the campaign will triple our scholarship funds for students, including a new Rural Students Scholarship fund already over \$1.3 million. We created our first endowed professorship, the UMM Distinguished Visiting Professorship in the Liberal Arts, with \$1 million contributed through a combination of gifts and matching funds from the University. Altogether we have raised \$3.6 million for scholarships, over \$2.5 million for academic programs and \$1.4 million for faculty and staff support. The campaign has helped us give the entire community a place in Morris to promote fitness, and it is giving us the funding to launch a dramatically ambitious program to send each and every UMM student abroad during her or his undergraduate years.

We keep our promises. But, as we have heard before, we at UMM can not rest on our laurels: we are restless on our laurels. We have miles to go before we sleep, miles to go. This work is well begun, but it is not over and we know and hope it will not be over in our lifetimes. A college is about becoming, not about achieving. We must never think we are “there,” but always know we are on the way. But what a journey we have taken together these past years. How far we have come. How much more expansive the horizons we can see now. We can not rest, but we should pause just a while to share our joy at how much progress we have made, how many promises we have kept, how many miles are behind us as well as ahead. As always, Shakespeare says it best, so I'll let him speak for me. He says, “How proud am I of thee and of thy gifts.”

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.