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September 21, 2017 - From the President's Desk

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September 21, 2017 - From the President's Desk



Dear Campus Community,

When I accepted the honor to serve as your president, I knew there would be difficult times ahead. But I am convinced that by working together we can overcome every obstacle.

It will not be easy, and it is not an exaggeration to say that what happens over the next two years will determine the course of our university for decades. It's a daunting challenge to be sure. But we also have an immense opportunity to shape this institution, Ohio, and beyond. I believe the vast potential of our university far outweighs the temporary setbacks we are experiencing.

There is also no need to be embarrassed by or uncomfortable speaking about what occurred. Recognizing, understanding, and discussing it will only help us as we set a bold course for the next 50 years.

In his book *How the Mighty Fall and Why Some Companies Never Give In*, Jim Collins explains that great institutions can stumble, and stumble badly, yet recover and come back even stronger. Collins writes: "The signature of the truly great versus the merely successful is not the absence of difficulty, but the ability to come back from setbacks, even cataclysmic catastrophes, stronger than before."

This is one reason why I believe Wright State finds itself on a precipice, ready to soar.

As I said in my [State of the University Address](#) last Wednesday, we can envision several scenarios for the future that are well within our grasp. We can be Icarus, who ignored his father's warnings about complacency—flying too low so the dampness of the ocean air clogs his wings—and hubris—flying too high so the sun's heat would melt the wax that held the wings together.

Or we can be the Wright brothers, whose approach was unique and did not follow the great-means-big strategy pursued by other experimenters of the time. With no formal college education, Wilbur and Orville worked with the Smithsonian Institution and other experimenters to tap into a wealth of information and learn all they could about design and flight. They built their own wind tunnel to test wing and propeller designs to create reliable data. They innovated by studying birds in flight, by moving outside their "industry" as some would say. No one can question the discipline and accountability of the Wright brothers.

As you know, the focus in my first year is three-fold: financial sustainability, administrative transparency, and campus conversation.

I have begun assembling a strong leadership team and making necessary changes in structure to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. Our new Chief Business Officer Walt Branson will help bring a customer focus and improved services shared across campus. Walt and I will work together with the campus community to place this institution in as strong of a financial position as possible by the end of this fiscal year.

Great progress has already occurred, due in large part to difficult decisions made and implemented over the past six months. Thank you to all who so generously serve and continue to invest for the greater good. We ended our fiscal

year 2017 with \$10 million more added to our reserves than initially expected. By strictly adhering to our fiscal year 2018 budget we expect to return at least another \$6 million to the reserves. This will require discipline and accountability.

As we focus on campus conversation, we will launch a new series of community forums called “Let’s Talk.” Scheduled for 11:30 a.m. in the Student Union Apollo Room on October 3, the first forum will focus on the Wright State Research Institute and the Wright State Applied Research Corporation with a panel of experts who will engage in a dialogue with attendees. Each session in the “Let’s Talk” series will focus on a single issue or theme. More details are available on the [Office of the President website](#), where you can also suggest topics for future discussion.

I am committed to developing strong relationships with our employees who form the very heart of this institution. Over the last few months, I have met with hundreds of faculty and staff and will continue to meet with colleges, divisions, and units across campus to understand more fully the true influence and commitment you have on student success.

This fall we will begin forging a new path together through a bold, comprehensive strategic plan that will guide Wright State into its next 50 years. This effort will provide a vision and focus that directly links resources to our values and strategic priorities.

I know that change can bring anxiety and it is not always welcomed with open arms. But I encourage you to think of this requisite change as an investment in our future that will make us leaner and stronger. I encourage you to take on an opportunity mindset.

If we all work together, I have no doubt that we can overcome any challenges that come our way. And I hope you will never lose sight of one thing: excellence abounds at Wright State and you are all part of that excellence. Thank you for your many contributions.

Warmest regards,

Cheryl B. Schrader, Ph.D.
President

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