

**Fall Convocation 2009**  
**4:30 p.m. Friday, August 21, Cranford Park**

**ABE HARRAF**

Good afternoon students, parents, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends. Please be seated.

I am Dr. Abe Harraf, UNC's Provost, and it is my honor to welcome you to our campus and to our 2009 Fall Convocation.

The word *convocation*, which comes from Latin, literally means *a calling together*. It's an academic ritual that dates back many centuries and a tradition we use at UNC to welcome new members of our University community.

If you are one of our new students, would you please stand so we can recognize you.

Welcome, students. You may be seated.

We have 44 new faculty members this fall, and I cannot begin to tell you what an impressive group of scholars they are. Would our new faculty members please stand.

Thank you, and welcome. Please be seated.

I am also honored to recognize our new staff members. Would you please stand.

Welcome. Please be seated.

It is now my pleasure to introduce UNC President Kay Norton.

## **KAY NORTON**

Good afternoon, and welcome to UNC.

I get to tell our new students about another centuries-old tradition we observe at UNC. The robes we are wearing today link us to European students and church scholars of the Middle Ages.

My robe and this beautiful backward sash, called a hood, tell you what level of college degrees I hold, from what school and in what subject. My base robe is blue, representing UNC's colors of gold and blue.

The three bars on my left sleeve represent a doctoral degree, in my case the *Juris Doctor*, Doctor of Laws in Latin. The purple velvet on my hood represents the law as the subject of my highest degree, and the crimson trim represents the University of Denver, where I earned that degree.

I wear the tassel on my tam on the left side to signify I have graduated.

And this major bit of bling around my neck is the seal of the University of Northern Colorado, representing the authority of the presidency.

By participating in this ceremony and wearing these traditional garments, we are part of a long line of scholars before us.

This regalia and the symbolic colors and cut of the garments have been adopted around the world as the representation of academic achievement. And when you graduate, they will signify your achievement as well.

Wherever you are in your journey toward that academic achievement, we are glad to have you as a member of our University community.

Community is an essential part of who we are at UNC. It holds us together as a campus and gives us a reason to hold ourselves accountable to one other. The human potential that we as individuals bring to UNC is the foundation for this community, but its strength comes from our ability to work together.

If we are to be truly effective in this work, we must also reach out to the Greeley community. We are honored to have Mayor Ed Clark joining us today to give you an official welcome to Greeley. Mr. Clark is a UNC alumnus who has followed in our long tradition of public service by serving as Greeley's mayor for the past two years. Please welcome The Honorable Ed Clark.

## **ED CLARK**

*[Mayor's remarks]*

## **RAUL CARDENAS**

*[Thanks Mayor Clark and introduce Reyna]*

## **REYNA CRUZ**

Hello everyone, before I get started, I just want to welcome you all to UNC! I hope you all can make the most out of being a bear and enjoy college for what it's worth.

My name is Reyna Cruz; I am a sophomore with a double major in Spanish and Human Services. I am a native to Greeley, growing up in Platteville, Colorado and today I hope to bring you all some inspiration. How throughout my college journey I have met many people, traveled to different places, worked in professional settings, and grew to respect others. A story about myself and as many of you can relate, I hope that you can take my words in as a reminder.

All right, so a new school, a new home, new friends, a new sleeping schedule. For me, college was a going to be a whole new world. Never had I doubt I would end up here, at UNC, but finally being here was surely a major change for me.

It was moving out of my parents to live on campus, learning to manage my money, not having anyone tell me when to do my work, finding a job, and learning to grow up. I was going to become an adult and it was on me to make my own decisions.

Now you should all know, I am the fifth oldest of seven with four older brothers and two younger sisters; only three of my brothers graduated from high school and then it was my turn. Of all my older siblings' only one of my brothers decided to further his education by attending DADC, Denver Automotive and Diesel College, while my other three brothers went on to work. It was important to my parents and I could see how proud they were for my brother.

Well of all my siblings, not only was I the next in line to graduate from high school, but I was very much expected to attend a university.

Since I was in middle school I had people – teachers, family, and friends – who not only encouraged me, but would support me to do whatever it took to be accepted into college. It was a good thing for me because soon I had a personal desire to attend college no matter what it took.

The influences in my life played one part, but most importantly, my decision to attend college over everything was the motivation to better myself for the real world.

Growing up I understood, especially by seeing how my parents and brothers would struggle, that working is not enough. For me, having a job was one thing, but to have a career was another; I want a career.

My decision to attend college mostly came from wanting to impress those around me too. Those who I love and did not want to disappoint, I wanted to make proud.

So I did. I decided I would do whatever I had to in order to get to where I am today. I am the first to attend a university, so that already is something my family and friends are proud of.

Not just the first of seven, but my mother who is oldest of nine and my father one of eleven, not very many had the privilege to attend college before. And that's what it is, a privilege.

My hope for you all is that you engage in this privilege, may it transform you for your future, and may it enrich your life!

And as I mentioned before some of you may relate or have stories that cannot compare to others, but again this is a reminder, from me to you! We all have our own story, so what brings me here before you today? I am here! And guess what? So are you!

Remember it is a blessing many hope for, it is your turn to start here and begin your path towards success! There are people all around you who are here for you all! Thank you.

## **RAUL CARDENAS**

It is now my pleasure to introduce our keynote speaker Dr. Courtney Willis. Dr. Willis first came to this campus as a freshman with a gymnastics scholarship in 1962, when UNC was still called Colorado State College. He graduated with a double major in physics and mathematics and went on to teach in Connecticut and Arizona.

After that, he earned a master's degree at the University of Wisconsin at Superior and taught in Woodland Park, and then returned to Greeley to teach at the UNC Laboratory School. He went back to school again in 1989 to complete his doctoral degree at the University of Wyoming, and returned to Greeley once again, this time as a UNC professor.

Dr. Willis has taught in our Physics department and at the Institute for Chemical Education Summer Workshops. He has worked with future science teachers, the Jr. Academy of Science, and the Long's Peak Science Fair. And he has been honored with many, many awards recognizing his expertise in Physics and teaching as well as his extensive service to the teaching profession.

In May, Dr. Willis earned UNC's highest faculty honor, the M. Lucile Harrison Award for Professional Excellence, given to faculty who inspire both their students and their colleagues.

Dr. Willis's dedication to teaching—and learning—is an extraordinary example for all of us. Please welcome Dr. Courtney Willis.

**DR. COURTNEY WILLIS**

*[Willis Remarks]*

## **RAUL CARDENAS**

Now, I'd like to introduce you to someone who has been part of our campus since 1960, when he came here to teach history at Colorado State College. Dr. Robert Larson was named UNC Professor of History Emeritus in 1990, and he claims to be retired, but we know that's not really true. Dr. Larson is a respected scholar of the American West, and he continues to publish critically acclaimed work—most recently the scholarly biography, “Gall: Lakota War Chief.”

Dr. Larson is also the preeminent scholar of UNC's history, and that's why we've invited him here today. When UNC celebrated its centennial in 1989, Dr. Larson published, “Shaping Educational Change: The First Century of the University of Northern Colorado at Greeley.” He has a talent for capturing the spirit of our campus in his stories, and as author James Michener said, he has “put the history of this feisty institution into the record.” Please welcome Dr. Robert Larson.

## **DR. ROBERT LARSON**

I would like to make a few remarks about the history and traditions of the University of Northern Colorado, where you will spend at least four years learning and preparing yourselves for life in the world of work.

One hundred and twenty years ago, on April 1, 1889, UNC became an institution of higher education when the governor of Colorado signed a bill authorizing the state to locate a school for training teachers at Greeley. Fourteen months later the cornerstone for the east wing of the school's first building was laid during a big celebration that occurred right here on this spot where we are meeting today. The building was named Cranford Hall in honor of John and Jane Cranford, who had contributed part of the land for the school's original campus, which was located on what was then called Rattlesnake Hill south of the then small town of Greeley.

In the twelve decades since the college's humble beginnings, both UNC and Greeley have grown significantly together in a largely cooperative manner. One person who deserves a lot of credit for this growth is the college's second president Zachariah X. Snyder. He was able to transform the school from a two-year one to a four-year one which was qualified to offer a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1907. Snyder also hired an outstanding faculty, the most prominent member of which was George Bruce Halsted, the internationally known pioneer of non-Euclidean Geometry, who received awards for his work in mathematics from governments throughout the world.

During Snyder's quarter of a century tenure as president, the college's success in training elementary and secondary school teachers compared favorably with the prestigious Columbia Teachers College in New York City. The school soon became known as the Columbia of the West, drawing teachers from all over the Midwest and South, especially after the school was authorized to offer graduate programs in 1913. The institution of a popular summer school program in which the college's leaders stressed the cooler, less humid climate of Colorado also proved to be an effective lure in attracting students from all over the country until the advent of air conditioning made studying in the sultry climate of the East more appealing.

In 1924 UNC chose a president who, like Snyder, also served for a quarter of a century and probably did as much to put the college on the map as any of the school's other leaders. He was George Willard Frasier, a protégé of the famous educator John Dewey. Frasier would settle for nothing less than national leadership in public education for the Greeley school. He insisted that his faculty not only shape their students into good teachers, but that they become members of a publishing faculty that would influence teacher education throughout the country with their writings.

The result was a busy faculty that was not only researching and writing books about teaching methods, but also about books that were unearthing vital information in those subject matter fields that make up a solid college curriculum. One example of an important contribution to American higher education was a study of the American Revolution published by a history professor from the college named Oliver M. Dickerson, whose book was described by one noted Yale scholar in 1958 as providing more new information about the Revolution than any study published during the past twenty-five years.

Best known of the Frasier scholars, however, was the famous novelist James A. Michener, who not only taught at the college but earned a master's degree here as well. One of the foremost authors of the twentieth century, Michener was honored by UNC when the school, in cooperation with many Michener readers, organized the James A. Michener Society in the UNC library building that now bears his name.

Frasier was also responsible for starting the Little Theater of the Rockies, which is celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. When the famous Elitch Garden Theater in Denver was closed, the Little Theater of the Rockies became Colorado's oldest summer stock theater.

This proud distinction is matched by the Greeley Philharmonic Orchestra, an organization founded in 1911 which has convincingly represented the value of close cooperation on the part of UNC and the city of Greeley in the promotion of cultural events; the orchestra is, in fact, the oldest one in continuous existence west of the Mississippi.

After World War II the school expanded rapidly into other areas besides its fields in teacher education, establishing schools of nursing and special education and bolstering its liberal arts programs in such fields as math, science, the humanities, and the social sciences. Indeed, in 1970 the school's diversified program won for it the university status it enjoys today. It has proven itself worthy of this status during the past four decades. Its Kenneth W. Monfort College of Business, for instance, was granted the coveted Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in 2004 for its business program.

But the school's achievements have not been entirely academic; it has a proud record in intercollegiate athletics as well. After spending many years as one of the dominate schools in the old Rocky Mountain Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, it joined the Division II North Central Conference, where its football team won two national championships under Coach Joe Glenn in 1996 and 1997.

UNC is now a Division IA team, which includes the Ivy League schools and a number of state universities and colleges throughout the country. The challenges of winning in this tougher division have been formidable, but UNC with its great traditions in higher learning and its service to the state will prevail, I'm sure, as it has done in the past 120 years.

### **RAUL CARDENAS**

*[Thanks Dr. Larson and introduce Lori Braa]*

### **LORI BRAA**

I want to welcome you to UNC. My name is Lori Braa and I'm a second year PhD student in Sport and Exercise Science. It was 29 years ago, almost to the day, that I sat where you are. It was just about 125 miles south of here at the University of Southern Colorado. I remember being a little nervous but also excited to begin a new chapter in my life. I had just graduated from high school, left the people I had gone to school with for most of my life and I was wondering: "Could anything be better than high school?" Well, the answer is yes, and over the next 4 years you will come to agree with me.

My first 12 years of education and parental advice prepared me for what was to come, and that was college. What I loved about college was the opportunity to study and learn what I was passionate about, and that was teaching.

College is about exploring, challenging ideas, creating new ideas, being able to pursue your passion. I remember being able to share openly in my classes. I went to a college where professors knew my name and cared about me not only as a student and learner, but as a person. They encouraged and challenged me to think outside of the box.

I enjoyed sharing and hearing classmate's views from those around the country and from across the globe. At the time, I didn't think anything could beat my undergraduate experience, but when I came to UNC 12 years later for my Masters degree, I realized this was the best educational experience.

I brought with me life experience and a new passion, for as much as we like to think we have all the answers to our journey in life, we don't always find road to be straight. Life taught me that there will be change, but my education taught me to look at it as an opportunity.

I began a new a career, I had a new dream and once again, my education challenged me personally and professionally, and it was then I realized that I had become a lifelong learner. College inspired me to reach farther and dream bigger. I was hooked on learning and on higher education.

So 15 years after getting my Masters degree, I stand before you now as a doctoral student, and if you have been trying to add up just how young I am, at 48, I am still a lifelong learner, excited about being in the classroom, engaging in conversations that still challenge my mind and leave me thinking late at night what I had just learned and how to apply it to my life and my career.

So I'm excited to look out over the crowd, wondering how many of you will someday, maybe at 48, maybe sooner, maybe later, will be up here looking at the next generation of lifelong learners and reflecting back to the wonderful years of education and as you pursued and fulfilled your dreams and goals.

Good Luck and never stop seeking or dreaming or challenging your mind.

**Raul Cardenas**

*[Thanks Lori]*