

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the 2009 State of the University Address. My name is Stephen Luttmann, chair of the University's Faculty Senate, and as such it is my duty and privilege to introduce the President of the University, who will deliver that address. Now the President isn't exactly an unknown quantity, and by now most of you are probably familiar with her biographical data, so in lieu of a verbal résumé I would like to tell you a brief story instead. I'm sure you'll quickly recognize it as a metaphor of our current situation, but let me assure those of you who dislike metaphors that the story also happens to be entirely true.

In the early morning hours of April 24, 2007, a fire broke out on the stage of Langworthy Auditorium, causing considerable damage to the stage and destroying the sets for the Theatre School's production of Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*, which was to open the very next day. Under normal circumstances one might have postponed the show, but it was too late in the semester for that, and anyway, that's not how we operate around here.

It may sound trite to say that The Show Must Go On, but that's precisely what happened, and the production was immediately rescheduled for Milne Auditorium in Kepner. Sitting in the audience, I was more than a little curious as to how Tom McNally and his troupe of student actors would manage. Performing Shakespeare without sets might not be such a big deal. Performing Shakespeare without props is a little bit daring. (That's why they're called "props.") Performing Shakespeare on a stage smaller and differently shaped than the one used for rehearsal, however, was a recipe for disaster, since so much depends on precise blocking in order to execute the frequently acrobatic stage action. Oh, and it hadn't occurred to anyone to switch on the air conditioning. Remember that this was late April. Sweating in my seat, I could only imagine how the actors felt.

Those of you who were there know how it all turned out. What ought to have been a lurching mess was in fact one of the best performances our Theatre folks had put on in years – and around here, that’s saying a lot. The drama was riveting; the comedic and kinetic timing flawless; the diction both natural and poetic. After the first couple of minutes, nobody noticed the heat either, although subsequent rumor has it that the air conditioning magically switched on during intermission because someone had noticed that a certain Kay Norton was in the audience. She was and is, wouldn’t you know, a season ticket holder.

Two years later, and I’m sure you’ve all noticed we’re all facing adversity now. Some of it is even being borne by our brave folks in the School of Theatre Arts. But what you are about to hear from the President is an account of how people and offices from all across the University are using their best talents and ideas to ensure that this institution will not only survive but prosper, and of how some of their initiatives are already producing meaningful results. After all, whatever our function here, and whatever our disagreements, we are all devoted to passing on our best wisdom to those we teach, or advise, or schedule events for, or make lunch for; and as you can imagine from my story, we also find ourselves being inspired by them as well.

At least I *imagine* that the President will be reporting on some of these initiatives; I must confess I haven’t seen her text. But because she spends so much of her time everywhere from here to Denver to Washington to points around the globe making sure that Colorado’s Best University Experience is also Colorado’s Most Poorly Kept Secret, I can’t imagine why she’d pass up this opportunity to tell you that despite all adversity, there’s a lot of good news to report. The show most definitely will go on.

Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the University of Northern Colorado, Kay Norton.