

2008 State of the University Address
James W. Wagner, President
23 September 2008

It was five years ago this month that I began this privileged relationship I have of serving as your president, and those years have been fulfilling, enjoyable, challenging, and rewarding in ways that I could not fully have imagined at the start. Having come to the end of my first five years here, I look forward to the next five years with the same exhilaration that I felt at the start, and with an openness to still more as-yet-unimagined pleasures in the company of this remarkable community.

In each of my previous State of the University Addresses I was proud to proclaim, with every good reason, that the state of Emory University was very good. And this afternoon I can say the same thing.

But, in addition to our favorable state and positive trajectory, there are concerns that we need to pay attention to. Not uncontrollable issues at this point, but genuine concerns that, if we don't attend to them early and decisively, could progress from nagging and niggling to worrisome or worse. Before I talk about some of those concerns, let me say first why we at Emory have much to be confident about.

During the past year the faculty, staff, and students of Emory have continued in their inimitable ways not only to fulfill their personal aspirations but also, thereby, to make of Emory more of a destination for all that is excellent. For example, this year's freshman class in Emory College comes from the largest

pool of applicants in our history and is the most highly credentialed and diverse as well. Oxford College also has benefited from a 68 percent increase in applications over the previous year. Similarly, our professional programs have enjoyed strong applicant pools. In fact, with the addition of the medical education building and continued implementation of the new curriculum, our School of Medicine proved to be a more attractive destination than ever to prospective students.

The Goizueta Business School, ranked once again in the top five undergraduate business programs in the country, continues to benefit in its recruitment of students thanks to this favorable attention. The Candler School of theology had a remarkable recruiting year for faculty, engaging candidates willing and wonderfully credentialed to contribute to the somewhat risky, and certainly uncommon circumstance among our peers, of contributing to the enterprise of maintaining a theological studies program ranked among the very best, and doing so while drawing on the strength of a strong denominational affiliation.

We have been a more effective destination for research dollars as well, especially in our health sciences, with the School of Medicine earning a 10 percent growth in research funding, the School of Nursing up 8 percent, and Yerkes up 13 percent, all during a period when available NIH funding nationally has been flat. Speaking of being positioned better for research funding, I might mention here that the Winship Cancer Institute recently welcomed a site-visit by the National Cancer Institute to determine the outcome of Winship's application for the hard-to-get P-30 grant and another step toward designation as a

comprehensive cancer center. Whatever the final outcome of this application, it is clear that Winship has made very impressive strides in the past decade, including a tripling of its research funding from eight million to twenty-five million dollars in just the past five years.

Finally, as we search for the next dean of the Woodruff School of Nursing, we have attracted a superb pool of candidates eager to build on the remarkable research foundation laid by former Dean Marla Salmon and her colleagues.

Truly, these are indicators of the degree to which we are increasingly an attractive academic destination.

In addition to the role of our faculty in attracting top students and a greater share of the national pool for research support, our staff members have been effective as well in bringing distinction to Emory. Last spring we were recognized by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* for being one of the nation's "Great Colleges and Universities to Work For." Only one other campus was ranked in the top five in more categories than Emory. And it has been announced also that Emory has been selected as Georgia's "Conservationist of the Year," a testimony to Emory's commitment to sustainability. Thank you and congratulations to all.

In addition to these gratifying statistics and kudos, we can point to progress also in the astonishing array of initiatives in the implementation of our strategic plan. This sort of progress is ongoing. As we reflect on it we should feel satisfied by our achievements and at the same time be energized about prospects for the future. To list them all would risk not only trying your patience

but also extending this exercise well beyond your willingness to endure it. But let me give you a few examples.

In the realm of Creativity and the Arts, during the past year Emory College launched its new Center for Creativity and the Arts, naming as its first executive director Leslie Taylor, chair of the Theater Studies Department. This center will strengthen student access to the arts through new incentives for participation, new resources for student groups and residence-hall programs, and a new arts festival. Last spring an entire issue of *Emory Magazine* was devoted to the theme of creativity. Emory also received national attention last spring—including wonderful coverage in the *New York Times*—for “A Fine Excess,” a poetry conference on campus co-sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts.

As part of a Faculty Development Initiative in this area, we launched a lecture series to bring Luminaries in Arts and Humanities to campus, including novelist Shashi Tharoor, writer William Dalrymple, and historian Nell Irvin Painter. And in October, through a collaboration between the Center for Creativity and the Arts and the Computational Life Sciences Initiative, we will host a symposium that will bring evolutionary scientists together with composers, playwrights, sculptors, and choreographers. The arts and humanities are strong and flourishing at Emory.

Under the theme of Preparing Engaged Scholars, we have been similarly busy implementing the steps outlined by our strategic plan. Just recently we announced the gift of \$3 million from The Coca-Cola Foundation, \$1 million of

which will support engaged learning, research, and service activities related to environmental issues in Atlanta neighborhoods and coordinated by our Office of University Community Partnerships, and \$2 million of which will underwrite our Emory Advantage Program for students in Goizueta Business School and the Woodruff School of Nursing.

From strategic initiative funds, the University itself is dedicating an additional \$5 million over the next five years to expand student programs in this area—programs like the Ethics and Servant Leadership Summer Internship, and Volunteer Emory—and to augment the staff support for these and other programs. In the coming year we will take further steps to strengthen what we are doing in this area, as we seek to hire Emory's first director of engaged learning, develop a graduate certificate program in community building and social change, and introduce a faculty development program to help interested faculty members focus their research expertise and teaching on community issues.

In our continuing effort to fulfill Emory's vision to be a destination university, we have put a lot of resources and innovative thinking into our strategic theme of **Strengthening Faculty Distinction**. With the aid of our Faculty Distinction Fund, and the Presidential Strategic Initiatives Fund, made possible by our friends at the Woodruff Foundation, we have been able to recruit eminent scholars in such fields of biology, developmental economics, and Chinese history.

Many of these are academic leaders, who have already proven themselves at other universities and are eager to take advantage of the

opportunities for dynamic and positive transformation in the world through Emory's programs and with Emory colleagues.

Distinguished faculty members already within our Emory community continue to receive national recognition; last spring, for instance, two members of our faculty were elected to the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Sciences: Frans deWaal, the Charles Howard Candler Professor of Primate Behavior, and our provost, Earl Lewis, the Asa Griggs Candler Professor of History and African American Studies. Similarly, Dr. Kerry Ressler, an Emory neuroscientist at our Yerkes National Primate Research Center, was named one of fifteen new Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigators, one of the most-sought designations for medical researchers. As an added feather in his cap, he is the first practicing physician ever to be appointed a Howard Hughes investigator. We are doing more to make certain that the achievements of our remarkable faculty members are acknowledged at home as well as farther afield.

But Emory is a very complex and large community, and it's difficult to keep up with all the good news being made every day. To help us stay abreast, we are enhancing many of our web pages that focus on chaired professors, great scholarship, and other academic achievements. Along these lines, our launch of the new Emory web site last month has received rave reviews and is a great tribute to the long and hard work of our Communications and Marketing team led by Vice President Ron Sauder. For this and other efforts to make Emory more visible—more “recognized,” as our vision statement puts it—our communications and marketing team is to be congratulated for the fact that Emory was ranked

third this year among all universities for its media momentum, the degree to which media reporting about Emory has increased over the previous year—a sign that the world is taking note of a continuous stream of scholarship of consequence punctuate from time to time with especially noteworthy stories like the naming of the Dalai Lama as a distinguished professor, the acquisition of the SCLC papers and those of Alice Walker, and most newsworthy, the discovery of a zebra in the halls of the administration building at Oxford! It is affirming when others corroborate the sense of momentum that we feel.

To help us learn from each other and to celebrate excellence here at home, we have launched “The Life of the Mind” series highlighting the work of the likes of our own Dennis Choi, executive director of the Computational Neuroscience Initiative. In addition to highlighting the achievements of faculty members who already have made Emory their home, we have dramatically increased the opportunities to host on our campus distinguished faculty from other institutions, through visiting appointments and speaker series like the “Luminaries in Science” series and “Luminaries in the Arts and Humanities” and the Goodrich C. White Lecture, which will be given next month by the Pulitzer Prize winning scientist Jared Diamond.

To help assure that Emory becomes not only a destination for great academics but also the source of great academic leadership for the future of American higher education, we have launched the Center for Faculty Development and Excellence, directed by Laurie Patton; we continue to formalize processes by which we identify and nominate faculty for well-deserved national

prizes and membership in the national academies; and are instituting a new Academic Leadership Program. The mission of this program is to identify assistant deans, department chairs, and other faculty members who have the potential for distinguished and transformative academic leadership, and then to introduce these academic leaders to the kind of insights and preparation for academic administration that too often is learned on the job. In fact the first sessions of the new program will get under way this week. We can thank Earl Lewis and the Office of the Provost more generally for organizing and implementing these creative programs.

One of the things our Emory Vision holds out for us is not only the prospect of being a recognized destination university but also the intention of being *internationally* recognized as that destination. In that respect our **strategic emphasis on internationalization** is succeeding well.

The past year brought our highest enrollment ever of international scholars and students, up 16 percent to 1,281. On the other side of the equation, last year we also had our highest enrollments ever of students from our student body for study abroad, with some 12 percent of Emory College students studying abroad in 2007-2008. It is thanks to programs such as CIPA that the fraction of Emory undergraduates taking advantage of study abroad activities by the time they graduate is approaching 50 percent, well ahead of the national average of 19 percent.

Faculty in nearly all of our schools and colleges engage international colleagues or institutions in their work. The Global Health Institute under Jeff Koplan's direction is doing a truly remarkable job in coordinating activities in that broad area of research and is attracting significant outside support for its work. Our Institute for Developing Nations, directed by Dr. Sita Ranchod-Nilsson, funded five faculty research workshops, facilitated the travels of twelve Emory students to undertake research last spring and this fall in Senegal, Morocco, Uganda, Vietnam, and India, and collaborated with the Carter Center on an important program to confront gender-based violence in Liberia.

Along those lines our Law School, owing to its expertise and interest in law and religion and in international and comparative law, has been heavily engaged and will host next month an international conference on human rights featuring two Nobel Peace Prize winners and commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Over this last year, faculty and school administrators from around the campus have pursued new partnerships around the globe, such as a partnerships for vaccine development in India, drug discovery in South Africa, prospects for medical education in Egypt, and the list goes on.

As we look ahead to ways of strengthening our international reach even more, we have great hopes for the work of a new Emory International Advisory Council (EIAC), which will be launched later this year by Development and Alumni Relations (DAR) to provide support to Emory and networking to help expand Emory's visibility and access on a global scale.

Emory's vision suggests that a great international university both attracts the best scholars from around the world to its campus and finds ways to engage the world beyond the campus boundaries. These aims, along with the expansion of academic programs that have global visibility and impact, have led to a rapid increase in the number of invitations for our faculty and institution to engage internationally. As Emory has declared and demonstrated its intent to be working "for positive transformation *in the world*," as our vision statement says, we have increasingly found ourselves answering the phone rather than dialing it to discover international opportunities. With so many good opportunities presenting themselves, it is imperative to be explicit about our values, principles, and priorities, so as to pursue only the best opportunities—those truly worth the investment of our time.

To address this happy circumstance of becoming increasingly popular on the international scene, the Cabinet has opened a conversation with the deans and with our internal International Advisory Council to consider the best ways to guide our international development into the future. Over this academic year we will be refining these principles, so that Emory can offer academic leadership on the world stage bolstering, not compromising, Emory's excellence and integrity.

In addition to the growth of scholarship and program quality and activity, we are enjoying a period of continuing renewal—increased quality—of our physical plant. Two new and very green dormitories were completed over the summer on the Druid Hills campus and opened for freshman students this semester. At Oxford, likewise, the East Village residential center opened this fall

and has become not only the most coveted housing on campus but also the impetus for wholly new community-building activity on that unique and close-knit campus. Later this week we will dedicate the new building of the Candler School of Theology, and a part of that building that is set aside for expansive new “digs” for the Center for Ethics. The new psychology building is next for completion, and next month will see the completion of our new entrance from Emory Village. Work has begun as well on the North Oxford Road building, which will enhance Emory Village with shops and parking as well as provide a more elegant introductory experience for visitors coming to our Admissions Office and other parts of the Quadrangle. And this year, the new Rollins School of Public Health building will be coming out of the ground. Dr. Fred Sanfilippo, just concluding his first year as executive vice president for health affairs, has very ably taken up the work of guiding the transformation of our health sciences and health care programs and facilities plan on this campus and at our Emory Midtown Campus.

Much more could be said about the work of our other strategic initiatives like our Institute for Advanced Policy Solutions, our Predictive Health Initiative, the work in Religions and the Human Spirit and our initiative on Race and Difference. We could mention the impressive contributions of our “Humanities Laboratories” also. Specifically, I am thinking of our University Libraries and the remarkable new additions to our special collections and the groundbreaking work of our digital library programs. Then, too, the Carlos Museum has set new

standards with its award-winning exhibitions and international connections to attract world-renowned exhibits to Emory and to Atlanta.

Achievements within each of these strategic themes and initiatives and within our colleges, schools, and units have been impressive and gratifying. But I trust that you agree that much of our progress is aided (perhaps only possible) because of our commitment to “uni”-versity, the deliberate emphasis on collaborative engagement to make progress. Looking at the whole, rather than the parts, made it easy for the University leadership and the Board of Trustees to consider favorably the request offered jointly by our deans to drop the term “Arts and Sciences” from the name of the Graduate School, to underscore that graduate study at Emory engages graduate studies throughout our campus. On the other hand, Emory College has become Emory College of Arts and Sciences to emphasize the importance of a liberal arts education at the core of the undergraduate experience.

All that I have been talking about—our people, our programs at home and abroad, our facilities, our sense of collaborative community—just begins to get at the mind-boggling dynamism one senses at Emory.

In fact, in view of such dynamism, the term “state of the University” is a bit of a misnomer. “The State of the University” implies something steady, maybe even static. But Emory, clearly, is not something standing still. Emory has come far and fast in the past quarter-century, and in some respects we have picked up the pace in the past five years, moving faster with the goal of advancing still farther—rapidly but not recklessly.

Having said that, though, I need to acknowledge that such movement presents significant challenges and can take its toll. Furthermore, when a community like ours takes risk to answer the calling toward a vision, it can be more susceptible to external challenges than it might otherwise be. So, for a few minutes I want to talk about those challenges, internal and external, and the toll they might take on us as a community. This is where those niggling worries I mentioned come in.

Internally, Emory's commitment to be truly and fully a scholarly community and not merely a repository or barracks for individual and isolated scholars and healers, our commitment to humane values—our commitment to mutual interest and collaboration more than mere acquaintance among faculty colleagues; our commitment to compassion more than merely a cure in healthcare; our commitment to answering the call to service beyond the call merely to complete assignments in the classroom; our commitment to both excellence of mind and greatness of heart—is unusual if not unique among major research universities. Excellence of mind *and* greatness of heart. God forbid that we should ever sacrifice the latter in pursuit of the former. That would be far too high a toll to pay. Instead, in this exciting and dynamic period in our history, we must continue to demonstrate that these aims are complementary, not in conflict.

And now to those external challenges. Our good friend and Emory trustee Arthur Blank, who partnered with last year's Commencement speaker, Bernie Marcus, in founding Home Depot years ago, and who now owns the Atlanta Falcons, has a tee-shirt that says something he has taken as a kind of life motto.

He started wearing it when he was training for his first marathon years ago, and in a sense it says something about the work of Emory University: “There is no finish line.”

“There is no finish line.”

Yes, we have spelled out a vision; we have charted a strategic plan; we have identified certain benchmarks to measure our progress. But our work is a bit like the construction on this campus: it will never be finished. We are in this not for the quick hit, not just for the long haul, but for ever.

We are fortunate to have a clear vision of the next horizon, even though we know that there will be more horizons beyond that. But even the horizon to which we’ve been drawn by the aspirations of our current vision—even that horizon gives us a sufficiently long view not to despair in the face of near-term difficulties or disappointments.

In particular, I am thinking about the stresses likely to be imposed upon us by the current economic situation. Perhaps in these days each of you personally is experiencing the effects of fiscal belt tightening. In Emory’s case, our reaction to reduced revenues from investments, increased expenses for power and other utilities, and tightening credit must be to face these challenges with cool determination. For while these circumstances will temporarily force us to modify the pace of our progress, they must not keep us from advancing toward our vision; they will not divert our gaze downward so low that we lose sight of our goals.

To help ensure this, we are working in the early stages of this unfolding economic drama to ensure that our commitments to and investments in people will stay at the highest levels possible. We intend to protect also the investments necessary to ensure the success of our campaign, which in turn is absolutely vital for us to implement our strategy and prepare Emory for future economic challenges. Rolling up our sleeves together to face such complexities will bring a different kind of satisfaction than usual, as we experience the fruits of our determined efforts to adjust and adapt, while never deigning to consider ourselves as victims. We can find remarkable joy in the effort to be more efficient, in the commitment to be even more engaged and thoughtful, and in our creative determination to be more entrepreneurial in seeking financial support from sources beyond our campus walls.

We all hope that the constraints we feel as a result of the national economic picture will be temporary. In the meantime, I am confident that Executive Vice President Mike Mandl and his excellent team in Finance and Administration are doing all that can be done to minimize the long-term impact of the economic downturn. We will face it with courage.

In fact, we have talked a lot over the past five years about courage. The theme of our strategic plan is “where courageous inquiry leads.” The Emory Vision calls us to “courageous leadership through teaching, research, scholarship, health care, and social action.”

Even as economic uncertainties call for courage, we can be grateful for the courage and faith demonstrated by our friends in Atlanta and the state of

Georgia, in helping to work through the first steps in pulling Grady Memorial Hospital back from the brink of disaster. It is clear that we have completed only the early stages of this effort, though. There is much that the new leadership and operating board must do to ensure that Grady not only survives, but thrives. Grady of course is not Emory's; it is an invaluable resource for our city, our state, and indeed our region. But it is the place where Emory has partnered very powerfully with Fulton and DeKalb Counties throughout the University's existence in Atlanta to provide a level of trauma care and other medical services to the indigent and others. Grady is one of the places where Emory medical students and residents receive a kind of training that is difficult to receive anywhere else. Emory cannot rescue Grady alone, but we are doing our part. We are already providing millions of dollars a month in uncompensated medical care by our faculty physicians.

It is critical that others who understand the importance of Grady to step forward and help galvanize the political will to protect this irreplaceable resource. Grady is not out of the woods, but thanks to the hard work—the courageous leadership—of many of the friends that Grady and Emory have in common, we can at least feel confident that there is a map to guide Grady through the woods to open daylight.

If the current economic situation and the future of Grady are presenting challenges and uncertainty on the revenue side of the budget ledger, we can, by and large on the other hand, be pleased and proud of how we have been expending and investing responsibly our resources on the other side of the

ledger. Still, there is not—or at least not yet—enough money for Emory to do all that we are called to do. In striving toward our vision, we have discovered—quite appropriately—that our aspirations far outstrip our resources. (May it ever be so.) Our income from *current* gifts and from the endowment is fully committed to the work already at hand, and we have come to the point where our desire to build on this work can be met only through additional resources.

With this in mind, this week we are beginning to roll out the public phase, the final four years or so, of a comprehensive financial campaign. This seven-year fundraising effort, Campaign Emory, is intended not so much to help meet some of these external challenges about which we spoke, not to fill gaps, but really to provide the resources to fuel our further progress in our strategic plan. The past three years of quiet fundraising leading to our public announcement this week has given us time to plumb the depths of our prospective donor pool and set our priorities in order. Our success during the 36-month quiet phase has given us confidence that we will continue to succeed through the coming four-year public phase of the campaign. I invite those of you who are able to attend the celebration at the Clairmont Campus on Saturday to join in the festivities as we embark on this critically important period in Emory's history. And don't worry, you will not be asked to make a donation on Saturday. But do let me take this opportunity to encourage you to think about how you might invest in Emory's success by your own personal philanthropy over the next four years.

In closing, let me repeat that the state of our university is very good. Its trajectory toward our vision is positive. We enter this young academic year with confidence and determination, aware that the realities of the world economy and of the stabilization of our partner at Grady make the path forward a bit more uncertain than in past years—aware of these uncertainties, but not frightened by them. The quality of this scholarly community in academics and health care—its faculty, staff, and students—and the excellence of our leadership team are such that I can say in all honesty that I can imagine no other group with whom I would rather face these realities, in whom I would have more confidence in its ability to answer our noble calling to become a destination university internationally recognized as an inquiry-driven, ethically engaged, and diverse community whose members work collaboratively for positive transformation in the world through courageous leadership in teaching, research, scholarship, health care, and social action. I am so pleased to be your colleague and privileged to serve you as Emory's president. Thank you.