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Inauguration - President Hiatt's, 1974

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Series:

[Note: Dr. Hiatt based this speech on Thomas Hale Hamilton's Inauguration Address at the University of Hawaii on March 28, 1963]

<http://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/handle/10125/25793/A%20City%20Drenched%20with%20Light%20-%20Thomas%20H.%20Hamilton.pdf?sequence=1>

Robert E. McFarland reads the inauguration of Dr. Hiatt as the president of the University of Alaska. Robert E. McFarland invests Dr. Hiatt with the presidential medallion as a symbol of his authority.

The audience applauds.

Mr. Cashen speaks. He tells of the retirement of Charles Bunnell from the presidency. Dr. Bunnell was made president emeritus. As his first official act, President Emeritus Bunnell introduced his successor, Terris Moore, as president. Mr. Cashen reads a portion of the transcript of President Emeritus Bunnell presenting Terris Moore with a key. This key has been preserved this artifact for more than a quarter of a century. Past presidents Dr. Moore, Dr. Patty and Dr. Wood line up alongside of Dr. Hiatt and pass it to Dr. Hiatt.

The audience applauds.

Dr. Hiatt speaks. He jokes that no one seems to know what the key is for but he suspects it is to a locked door in his office labeled skeletons. The audience applauds. Dr. Hiatt greets the audience. He reads a poem about earthly vanity by Arthur Guiterman:

*"The tusks that clashed in mighty brawls
Of mastodons, are billiard balls.
The sword of Charlemagne the Great [sic]
Is ferric oxide, known as rust.
The grizzly bear, whose potent hug
Was feared by all, is now a rug.
Great Caesar's bust is on the shelf,
And I don't feel so well myself."*

He says that everyone could use some more humility. He feels humble and thankful. He introduces his family. The audience applauds. He says it is pleasing to see so many politicians. He thanks Terris Moore and Mrs. Moore, Ernest Patty and Mrs. Patty, William Wood and Mrs. Wood. He thanks Mr. Cashen. He is pleased with the exhibits and events being held. And in retrospect, he counts it a blessing that the

theatre group chose to present *Nightwatch*, for they might have tried to capture the spirit of the occasion by seizing the opportunity to present *Long Day's Journey Into Night*.

He says he does not assume the duties of a university president lightly. He is acutely aware that it is a position, which under the very best of conditions, fraught with a fair number of frustrations, a host of dilemmas, constant paradoxes, and, it often seems, but pitifully few successes.

Unfortunately, society seems to expect a great deal of a university president.

A few years ago, these expectations were expressed with both style and wit by John Gardner, at that time the President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York: "The university president is expected to be kindly with the students, patient with the alumni, irreproachable with the faculty, irresistible to the legislators, and awe-inspiring to the general public."

Then he continues with a sentence from which university president can never take much comfort: "It is an impossible job."

From the day he arrived in Alaska, a number of citizens including a goodly number of students and faculty have been willing to give him the benefit of their views on various problems and potentials of the university. The university's development has often been rocky but was maintained by strong willed leadership, particularly on the part of Charles Bunnell.

Now in 1974, a new episode in Alaska's economic and social history is upon us, coupling great construction projects with the Native Land Claims settlement.

The University of Alaska system operates on a clear mandate from our citizens to carry both academic and career-oriented post high school training to every corner of Alaska.

Education is the key to participation in this new era. It is incumbent for professional educators endeavor to do a better job than ever before in keeping the citizens informed of the university's role in the intellectual and skill development of Alaskans. He hopes that the people's representatives in the legislative and executive branches of our will find it prudent to strengthen the university's resources. He says growth in enrollment in universities in the lower 48 has allowed these universities to focus on the quality of education now that their energies are not being sapped by qualitative changes. The University of Alaska has no such luxury, however, with growth stimulated by the pipeline, other developmental projects, and other demands including the recruitment and retention of quality faculty. The University of Alaska must keep pace. It must not be content with being good but should strive to be outstanding.

How does a university become outstanding?

Dr. Hiatt mentions five: resources, the proper environment within and outside the university, time, citizen comprehension of the special nature of a university, and a sense of purpose within the university. He stresses the need for mutual concern between the university and the larger society within which it functions.

Dr. Hiatt speaks on the first factor: Although sometimes difficult to come by, the resources are the easiest factor to understand. The quality of a university cannot be judged solely on resources available or any other qualitative measure. He speaks of state appropriations. A few years ago, the Board of Regents took a step by regionalizing the university and establishing a system of community colleges. He speaks of his visits to these institutions. By way of the community colleges, it has been demonstrated that the state can afford a collegiate experience for 4 to 5 times greater a number than had been accommodated on the parent campus. He calls this a step forward in educational democracy. He says that, unfortunately, financial barriers still block many from a collegiate experience.

Dr. Hiatt proposes that legislators reduce the tuition for community colleges to no more than a token amount. This would make post high school education available to all who desire and can benefit by it.

He says we can afford it and that it is far better to pay for the education of the boy than the ignorance of the man.

Dr. Hiatt speaks on the second factor: the environment, on campus and within the state. Much of this the university itself has to create. Institutions, as individuals, tend to play the roles they cast for themselves, and an institution of quality always must exhibit competence and poise and maturity and self-respect. The larger community is also a conditioning factor. The community should encourage diversity of opinions and persons. Above all, the community's regard for the rational must transcend the political and the emotional. He says that the community must allow the university's regionalization enough development time to bring to each local in this vast state the instruction, research and extension programs which the Board of Regents and local advisory committees deem most appropriate. As a people's opportunity the university will have to meet people's needs but should not sway with each gust of wind.

Dr. Hiatt speaks on the third factor: time. Wise and purposive growth of higher educational institutions demands a sufficient period for development. There is no such thing as instant university or an instant community college. The responsibility, here, to steer a course between impatience and complacency and to resist attempts from others, no matter how highly minded, to pull the plant from the ground at frequent intervals to see whether or not it is growing. Universities seem to occupy an ambivalent place within the communities which create and support them. Any state desiring an outstanding system of higher education must understand something of the special nature of a university. This is difficult for university is generally recognized the most perplexing, frustrating, difficult, and wonderful social institution devised by man. A university exists for paradoxical ends. A university is mandated to question the value system which it is also supposed to preserve. This is why a public university is not like any other agency of government. The framers of the Alaskan constitution deliberately established the university as something very close to a fourth branch of the government. It cannot be regarded as simply another branch of government if it is to achieve its complex and lofty goals. Because of its paradoxical nature and because it is identified as a public agency of sorts, there exists a measure of tension between the state government and the university itself. This circumstance is common throughout the nation.

It is useful to keep in mind the generic quality of the problem. This is a dilemma that neither side really desires to resolve. The public interest would not be served if the university were to enjoy untroubled immunity, nor could the public interest be served if the university were constantly being subjected to intimate surveillance by the state. The underlying tensions are benign and both sides are the humbler for it. The precise border between the state and the university is fuzzy.

Finally, Dr. Hiatt is confident that no good university can exist unless it contains within itself a sense of purposiveness which is shared by all who make up the university community. It must know its nature, it must know its purposes, it must know the needed means, and it must have a plan which relates means to its purposes. The possibilities of planning can, of course, be overemphasized. The university must develop a general sense of direction or else others will do this for the university and far less satisfactorily. As the outcome of the academic planning now in progress, the university is bound to make some effort to be universal in its ambitions. A university is not a homogeneous institution of likeminded people, but rather a complex of programs which share some traditions: ie the use of reason to solve problems. Dr. Hiatt predicts that two concepts will stand out among all others in the University of Alaska's planning: equal educational opportunity and selective excellence. The decade of the 60's will mark the era of universal post-secondary education in Alaska. This means that every resident of Alaska who has graduated high school or is of a certain age should find somehow, somewhere find a chance for education in the statewide system if they so desire. We are an educational society. The university exists to prepare people for the roles that it believes they will fill while keeping social mobility in mind. Unfortunately, we are still plagued by Alexander Hamilton's idea. He believed in the essential equality of

all men while simultaneously advocating for the well-born to rule and the common man to accept his commonness as a necessary condition in the scheme of things. Our democratic society must reject such assumptions. Dr. Hiatt reflects on the prospects for democratizing higher education. He says that democracy is, itself, a paradox; at the same time concerning itself with the many and the one, variety within unity, the individual and the aggregate, the majority and the minority. It may be said that the function of the state is to provide opportunities for equal people to become unequal in socially desirable ways without denying the basic social and political equality of any citizen. How shall we implement such a goal in Alaska?

We shall accept the proposition that the university is responsible for developing the intellectual resources of Alaskan citizens to their maximum potential. This goal will be met not by forcing everyone through a cookie cutter education, but by education that recognized differences and respects the individual. We will achieve a statewide perspective on meeting existing educational needs. We will maximize options available to resident student. Community colleges and extension services will expand education to those usually not reached by universities. We will provide transferability within the university system to avoid duplication and allow specialization. Dr. Hiatt lists the merits of a liberal education. He discusses the limits of a university; he recommends that the university select its graduate program areas with care. Topics dealing with the north, maritime areas, natural resources and cultural diversity are areas that would be natural to focus on in Alaska.

Dr. Hiatt jokes that his remarks may make it seem like the university is faced with a host of insurmountable obstacles that he had disguised as opportunities. It is no good to underestimate the task ahead but he is optimistic. He elaborates on why Alaska's opportunities are unique. He discusses necessary resources: the combination of state, federal, and private money will be sufficient. He is dedicated to these ideas he has discussed and promises to use his influence to better the university in these aspects of planning related to purpose and means. He finishes his speech. Applause.

Another speaker speaks, thanking Dr. Hiatt and wishing him a very prosperous reign at this university. The speaker jokes that if he thought they could be as successful with the budget as they were this year, they might schedule an inauguration every year. There are many messages sent from all over the world. He will read three of them. The first is a joint resolution from the state legislature, resolving that Dr. Hiatt is welcome to the state of Alaska and is congratulated on his inauguration. They elaborate on Dr. Hiatt's good influence on education in the Pacific Basin. The second message is a telegram from Richard Nixon, congratulating Dr. Hiatt on his inauguration. He speaks of Dr. Hiatt's long range academic development program. He talks about how his background and experience will help the university. Applause. The last message is a message from Dr. Hiatt's mother expressing pride in her son and congratulating him. Applause.

The choir of the Fairbanks campus, "The Choir of the North", performs four songs conducted by Charles W. Davis.

Psalm 134
Dematroneson(?) by Herman Shine(?)
Hallelujah by Randall Thompson
The Song of Simeon by Alexander Gretchaninov

Reverend Walter A. Soboleff gives the benediction.

The tape cuts out, cutting off the last part of the program: the audience, led by both The Choir of the North and the chorus of the University of Alaska Anchorage, singing the state anthem, "The Alaska Flag Song".