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The Aims of Education Address
“How About Becoming a Poet?”

By Andreas Glaser

September 22, 2005

You have all come here to get what is called “an education.” Taken seri-
ously, education is a serious business. Let us begin there. As often as not, you
have come here to become—something better, or better, to become someone. If this is so,
then the question is: is this the question? It is a serious question?
And it is not just an invitation to the few of you who may, in the end, publish what
we might agree to call poetry, but it is an invitation to all of you! For I believe there
are poets in every human person—in every profession, including law, medicine, and
business. And I don’t mean physicians or lawyers or businesswomen who write
poetry on the side. I mean people who are poets as surgeons, as judges, as mana-
ger.
Let me explain.
For several reasons, I found it rather hard to write this speech. Besides being
intimidated by an awe-inspiring list of predecessors, I became quickly beset by
a curious nausea of language. Driven by my own research about the ways in which
people come to support or oppose dic-
tatorial governments, I wanted to speak
about the relationship between liberal
education, pluralism, freedom, critical
thinking, and creativity. This is a big subject. Many people have written
about it and talked about it before. In fact, this particular topic is something
one nearly always talks about once the
topic of liberal education is broached. So it feels—unfortunately—rather tired.
Hence, the virtues of “liberal education” are frequently extolled, while a focus on skill
development of a particular company
or market, that drafting a contract, policy, or law which actually work is just that:
an act of artful symbolization. However,
not only your excellence as a professional
but also the quality of your life in general
is vitally dependent on the quality of the
symbolizations you will craft. As we all
know, symbols are an act of art.
For that purpose, you will have to find
fitting descriptions in the world which
also connect your past with your present
and your future. Even our relationships with other human beings require suitable words for their upkeep and the resolution of inevitable crises.

The Power of Symbols
If making meaningful symbolizations is so relevant, we might really benefit from
an understanding of how symbols come to
orient us. What is the power of symbols?
Interestingly, in our everyday appreciation
of symbols we oscillate between two extremes. On the one hand we mock them,
for example, by calling them “mere words.”
On the other hand we venerate them as
the foundations of our way of life, for example, in the Gospel according to John or the U.S.
Constitution. How can we make sense of this?

In using symbols, we manage to “wrap” a part of the unwieldy manifold world as it appears to us into easily manipulable to-

te. However, the wrapping relationship is complex. What precisely gets wrapped, even in one and the same symbolization,
may vary considerably with context. For
example, you might call “I will” the
question “Would somebody please close the window?” “wraps” only a very limited commitment on your part into manageable
frameworks. Yet, the very same words “I will” wrap a lot more when you are replying to the question “Will you marry me?”

Conventions and context markers help us to sort out exactly what symbols wrap
in a given context. We know, for instance, that a rainbow can be interpreted as a
extraordinarily delightful candlelit dinner with sparkling conversation, we might fall
on our knees to break out into verse—or so
go one of the easily recognizable scripts.
In spite of the help of these context markers, however, what precisely gets wrapped in an instance of symbol use remains principally
open to negotiation and exploration. Many of
our discussions and arguments aim to
fix the content of wrapping. When
you said to your father you would “help him
in the kitchen” he may have wondered “Does this
only include doing the dishes, or does this
also pertain to peeling the potatoes?” It is important to note that this may have been unclear to both of you. Your father’s ques-
tion urges a dual clarification then: to him
and to yourself. His intervention alters your
consciousness, however minutely.
What you will say next about the mean-
ing of your words will, in all likelihood,
have little to do with what you had in mind
when you made your initial offer. What is at stake is not the past but the rest of
the evening. Your reply may depend on your
father’s estimate of the strength of your ego, your his-
tory with your father, the means of conflict
resolution available to you, etc. Moreover,
what you might be willing to accept retro-
spectively as having been included in your
initial offer may depend less on what and
more on how your father said it. The aes-
thetic quality of the wrapping contributes a
lot to how it will be received. In sum, then,
symbols do not simply wrap what is there.
Wrapping is a dynamic, even a gen-
erative act, that undertakes to create new
worlds and to itself. His intervention alters your
consciousness, however minutely.
Moreover, the logic of building with
Lego blocks made you look at the house in
which you lived with “different eyes” and
think about it in new ways. If you were a
Lego aficionado (like me), you learned to
see and think Lego: you discovered aspects
which you had built as if it was what you called it,
even though the structure had no obvious resemblance to anything you would now call
a “house.”
As you became older, you undoubtedly
endeavored to build either something you
had seen or something you had mentally
preconceived. For example, you might have
built a Lego house resembling the house in
which you lived. Doing so required not only increased skills of observation but also an increased understanding of what might be
called the “logic” of Lego blocks: a grow-
ing mastery of the ways in which they can be
assembled to produce particular kinds of
visual effects. To become good at this,
you had to take pleasure in playing with your
Legos without too much concern for what
it was that you might have wanted to build. You merely took pleasure in the
logic of Lego blocks and its inherent pos-
sibilities.

Sophisticated symbol systems, that is,
languages, resemble Lego blocks in sig-
nificant ways. They differentiate types of
symbols—for example, objects, relations,
and qualifiers—which play different roles in
wrapping operation. And like Lego blocks,
languages operate with logics of combina-
tion—which, in ordinary lan-
guages, we call grammar. Like Legos, then,
they are suitable for sophisticated play.
In fact, languages are the most wonderful
play-sets we human beings have come up with. They easily pur your old Lego
blocks to shame. With different types of symbols at hand, we can build up
can, and to extend our language use, much as in Lego construc-
tion, something fascinating happens in the
process of play. We simply forget that our
symbols wrap and that we are free to treat them as self- wrapping entries which
derive their meaning solely from their rela-
tionship in wrapping operation. And like Lego
blocks, the logic of building with symbolic
operations is complex. What precisely
gets wrapped, even in one and the same symbolization,
may vary considerably with context. For
example, you might call “I will” the
question “Would somebody please close the window?” “wraps” only a very limited commit-
ment on your part into manageable
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languages enjoy significant degrees of autonomy from the world. This affects not only how we perceive our world but also how we use its medium in which we can pretend, work through alternative possibilities, and build counterfactuals and hypotheses; we get imaginations. Making meaning, that is gaining orientation, we can step out of the maestral of life into the medium of symbols to ponder the world. Without symbols, there would be no reflexive thought—no learning outside of an immediate context of action.

However, there are also problems with symbolic autonomy. If the world does not effectively constrain our symbolic play with its immense, if not infinite, combinational possibilities, then how do we make sure our play isn’t just fun but also meaningful in our relationship with the world? In part, the answer is culture—complex traditions of symbol use into which we get socialized by learning a language. These cultures of symbol use often have a proven track record of producing meaningful combinations. The modes of scientific symbolization are amongst them. Nevertheless after some intensive play, we are faced with questions: “So what? Does our symbolization wrap anything at all? Do our symbols have the power to orient us?” With languages, those questions are never far away. This uncertainty is the source of our exasperation with language. It is a simple consequence of the fact that wrappings and what they wrap are different after all. Therefore wherever there are symbols, there is the possibility of doubt.

Of course the hope is always that when we put symbols to use in the world they do wrap and, therefore, organize it in such a way that we all of a sudden understand how it all hangs together. If it seems that way, we want to shout: “Eureka! I got it!” There is nothing new to say: we can move around in the world of symbols but we cannot find the same meanings as before. Our parents’ pre-9/11 way of going about our lives change. You may soon find yourself abandoning your high school’s lingo with its special terms for teachers, fellow students, or subjects. If so, the reason may not only be that this lingo is specific to your high school and therefore unintelligible at this university. Instead, you may find that the ways in which you approach teachers, classes, and learning in ways other than the ones you had in high school do not wrap for coming up with these writings. A third class of meaning loss comes about because our interests, values, and ways of going about our lives change. You may soon find yourself abandoning your high school’s lingo with its special terms for teachers, fellow students, or subjects. If so, the reason may not only be that this lingo is specific to your high school and therefore unintelligible at this university. Instead, you may find that the ways in which you approach teachers, classes, and learning in ways other than the ones you had in high school do not wrap anymore, and therefore have changed so much that the old slang somehow “does not cut it anymore.”

II

Orientation week is over. Now you have a pretty good idea of the possibilities and requirements of the program of study awaiting you in the next four years. Among the reasons for which you have chosen to come to the University of Chicago, our dedication to general education embodied in the common core may have had low priority or may not have figured at all. You may even have doubts about the practical relevance of such a course of study. In fact, you may feel that general education is something of a waste of time and resources because you already have a pretty good idea in which direction you want to take your education. However, it is precisely the idea of exercising yourself in a set of quite diverse fields of study which lies at the heart of what we call a liberal education. I would like to give this formulation precision and direction by claiming that it is the key task of a liberal education to acquaint you in sufficient depth with the study of diverse sets of modes of symbolic production.

Modes of Symbolic Production

From what I have said in the first part of this speech, you might already have a pretty good idea of what I mean by “mode of symbolic production.” No matter what topic you wish to do scholarly work about, you first have to learn the art of inventing new symbolizations or to rewrap the old ones in such a way that they can orient us in the world. Poetry was arguably the first human mode of symbolic practice of making or remaking symbols in a self-conscious fashion, that is, in a way which is cognizant of the process of making themselves. In fact, in ancient Greek the verb poiein means “to make or create.” Seen in this way, poetry can be understood as the art of making meaning, the art of charging worn symbols with new meanings, or the art of inventing new symbolizations which again give us an orientation in the world. Let us call the practitioners of this art “poets.” Would it not be marvelous if you could learn to be a poet?
symbolization, the publication, minimally combines an interpretation of the model hereafter as well as a discussion of the principles of analysis that are presented as evidence. Thrown in are more or less detailed remarks about the research process, including the literature consulted, methods and theories employed, and the data sources used. In this highly stylized sketch of five stages as they might occur in four sample modes, I have left out many aspects which dull and spice the experience: the writing of grant proposals; the critical discussions with colleagues, students, and friends; the presentations in the classroom, as well as at conferences and invited lectures; the competition, and sometimes the feud, with rival scholars; and the extensive mullings at conferences and invited lectures; the dull and spice the experience: the writing modes, I have left out many aspects which stages as they might occur in four sample data sources used.

In this highly stylized sketch of five modes of symbolic production is, by design, poetic in a serious people are about their citizenship. More importantly, however, the move in the world in connection with the limited mean observation, they have no meaning outside at hand. Our choice is not made for lack of being, a way of imagining, a way of being domestic division of labor, I tried to alert them as citizens. Of course it is an illusion their power to orient us in the world. Every mode of symbolic work requires a lot of variety is important because, as creativity creativity research has consistently shown, novel insight frequently occurs by transferring the wrapping techniques and forms of symbolic play from one domain to another. We call such transfers metaphors. Let us look at a concrete example of a creative leap enabled by metaphor. This year, we are celebrating the centenary of Albert Einstein's Annus Mirabilis. Between February and September 1905, Einstein wrote a pentad of papers out of which three had a revolutionary impact on the development of physics. Most famously, in the fourth paper finished in June, the twenty-six-year-old Einstein proposed the special theory of relativity. There are three decisive turns. First, he posits that, contrary to the then still regnant Newtonian assumptions, the universe does not have an absolute spatial or temporal orientation. Instead, measurements of lengths and of time are necessarily relative to an observer within an inertial system. The second turn is closely connected. If space and time are relative to a framework of observation, they have no meaning outside of a clear measurement concept. Finally, in the third and perhaps most surprising turn Einstein's theory of relativity allows the same constant speed no matter how the observer moves relative to the source of light. The postulate of a constant speed of light for all observers was a sharp contradiction to the characteristics of light which Einstein had described in the March paper made sense of a number of seemingly odd experimental results on the basis of a unified theory. Other physicists, therefore, had a harder time defending the existence of an "ether," that peculiar substance that was postulated by nineteenth-century physicists as permitting the entire universe in order to account for the wave characteristics of light. Put in the lingo of the modes of symbolic production, Einstein has suggested nothing less than a rewrapping of three central and old symbols: "time," "space," and "light." He was successful because he did not merely critique the old wrappings. He offered an alternative!

In the first part of this speech, I have spoken about the generativity of symbols. By that I meant to emphasize that symbols do not simply capture what we had already known but use the data from their relation to what they wrap is typically open to further exploration and negotiation. Through a very simple example from the departmental division of labor, I tried to alert you to the fact that symbolizations produce surprises in this way. Einstein's theory of special relativity is a good example. When Einstein himself used it as a stepping-stone for his general theory of relativity published a good decade later. Even more interestingly, other physicists drew conclusions about what precisely he had wrapped which Einstein was not ready to follow to the end of his life. Here, then, did Einstein come up with the theory of relativity? First, it is important to understand that throughout his life Einstein worked from a fundamental belief about the nature of nature which he did not derive from physics. Instead, it had deep roots in his ongoing studies in the subtleties of nature and in his spirituality. He was convinced that nature is governed by simple, all-pervasive, economical, and aesthetically appealing principles... For Einstein, nature was materialized reason, an immanent God. In all likelihood, he gleaned this understanding of matter from his readings of enlightenment philosophy, Spinoza above all. These readings date back well into his high school years, and they were continued throughout his studies in Zurich and among a circle of friends during his years as a patent officer in Bern. On the basis of his beliefs about nature, he felt that asymmetries in the explanation of natural phenomena were intolerable. One such asymmetry marred Einstein the theory of electromodynamics, which was the special theory of relativity in the development of nineteenth-century physics. Maxwell, its finishing architect, offered two discrepant accounts of how a magnet—produces an electric current. Such asymmetries, along with seemingly obscure facts about the characteristics of light which Einstein's spiritual-aesthetic sensibilities, thus motivating his work. Philosophy also influenced the way he found his solutions;
he was convinced that such problems could only be resolved on the basis of principles of self-location. This is what he set out to do—more geometrically.

As far as the relativity of time and space is concerned, Einstein was greatly influenced by the readings of the works of Swiss poet and philosopher Johann Heinrich von H debería, the writings of Hume, Mach, and Poincaré. Clock synchronization, the centerpiece of Einstein's concept of time, was a prevalent engineering concern in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Einstein himself had evaluated several patents offering solutions to this problem. His emphasis on measurement procedure was also inspired as much by philosophy as by his nitty-gritty work as a patent officer with its emphasis on the demonstrability of claimed effects. Finally, it bears mentioning that during his high school years in Munich, Einstein was an avid reader of popular science books which made much use of imaginary rides, for example, on light waves. This form of imagination was constantly employed by Einstein as a thinking tool.

Einstein's theory emerged, then, in the interstices between various modes of symbolic production. His fundamental motivating assumptions are metaphorical in style. His mode of reasoning is hypothetical-deductive, in the manner of philosophy or mathematics, which is, in addition, shot through with entirely (science-) fictional examples that are often somewhat shame-facedly called “thought experiments.” Yet he employs this reasoning to make sense of inductively, that is, experimentally generated puzzles which have offended his spiritual-aesthetic assumptions. Finally, he mingles engineering sensibilities about measurement and demonstrability with those of positivist philosophy to inform his formulations of concepts. Einstein's genius is one of thought experiments—his vision of a hermeneutics that in its own way may be considered an example of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Symbolization needs to be done and redone with others who affirm us, challenge us, and offer us a space in which we can play with others who affirm us, challenge us, and connect them to a problem which he studied with great perseverance. His ingenuity is based on finding and focusing on a high level of social organization. First, there is positive evidence. Creativity often comes in bursts across many fields at the same time, concentrated in dense, cosmopolitan cities. Classical Athens in the late fifth and early fourth centuries, and Pataliputra (today’s Patna) in the third century B.C.E. were such places; so were Fes in the fourteenth and Florence in the fifteenth centuries. Vienna and Tokyo saw such a burst at the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Today, New York is, perhaps more than any other city—sorry, Los Angeles—what we should aim to do. However, cities, even very diverse ones, are not necessarily creative hubs at all times. For cities to become fermenters of creativity, they need to become places of engagement between people with different ideas working with different modes of symbolic production. For that they need to offer people with diverse backgrounds several things. They need real core opportunities which allow them to become symbolically productive. And then they need an infrastructure of meeting places ranging from cafes to political, artistic, and scientific institutions, which facilitate a free, open-minded exchange between various modes of symbolic production thus sparking metaphors.

The point is that by fathoming the operation of diverse modes and by wrestling with their limits and possibilities, you stand at the gates of a splendid university—a wondrous metropolis of symbol makers ready for you to explore. Fearlessly walking its many streets, watching and listening intently, and asking questions with a curious abandon you may eventually make want to participate. It may kindle in you a passion for making deeply meaningful symbolizations, those which orient us in the world by enhancing our power to think, to power our experience deeply and reflexively, our power to imagine, and, thus, our power to imagine, and, thus, ultimately our power to live better lives. You could become a poet. And where, if not here; and when, if not now? Welcome to the University of Chicago.
On October 19, 2005

By Richard P. Saller

The Chairman of the Board of Trustees, James Crown, has written to the whole University community about the search for Don’s successor. A Trustee committee has been appointed, and a faculty advisory committee has been elected by the Council of the University Senate. They have begun their work of soliciting nominations. You are invited to suggest candidates.

Meanwhile, in a decentralized organization like ours, the responsibility for the continuity of academic programs rests in the hands of the Deans and department chairs. I am glad to be able to report that over the past year four Deans accepted responsibilities for new positions: William Glassy in the Med School, Richard Rosengarten in the Divinity School, Ted Snyder in the Graduate School of Business, and Jeanne Marsh in the School of Social Service Administration, and Saul Levmore in the Law School (the terms of Ted and Saul to begin next July). To all of them I want to express my appreciation for the leadership they have provided and for their willingness to continue in their highly demanding jobs.

The academic year 2004–05 saw more comings and goings among the tenured faculty than in the past few years. In contrast to the previous two years when faculty departures were about half the long-term average of 8 a year, the number of departures of tenured faculty was slightly above the long-term average. The numbers are small, and year-to-year fluctuations are expected. Nevertheless, numbers alone do not capture the intellectual loss of individual departures, and the Provost’s Office is doing a study of the reasons individual faculty give for leaving. At this point, it appears that the motives are very diverse and exhibit no dominant pattern.

On the positive side, we welcome a strong cohort of new faculty, including twenty-one tenured appointments in the last July of his acceptance of the presidency of the Andrew Mellon Foundation, to begin next academic year. We are deeply grateful to Don for his leadership and the work on behalf of the University. His many accomplishments range from a stronger scientific connection with Argonne National Laboratory to a more cooperative and optimistic relationship with the communities around the University. During his term he completed some of the important initiatives started before 2000 and has begun others that in turn will come to fruition under future Presidents.

Wilhelm Schlag (Mathematics) from the California Institute of Technology, and by broad interest, he has made significant contributions in the areas of harmonic analysis, partial differential equations, mathematical physics, and probability theory.

Michael Sells (Divinity) from Haverford College, scholar of the Qur’an, Islamic mystical texts, and Arabic poetry, his current research focuses on the contemporary polemic between Western and Islamic militants over rights, democracy, and tolerance.

Douglas Skinner (GSB) from University of Michigan, his empirical research in accounting and finance has provided notable insights on topics such as voluntary disclosure and corporate dividend policy.

Mark Slouka (English Language & Literature) from Columuba, writer of award-winning fiction and essays, his latest novel, The Death of Water and Fire, will appear shortly.

Malika Zeghal (Divinity) from CNRS, as a political scientist she studies power relationships in contemporary Islam manifested in settings as diverse as the Al-Azhar mosque in Cairo and the West Side of Chicago.

This University has a great tradition of regenerating itself through outstanding faculty appointments, and this year is no exception. Sixty-nine promising younger faculty appointments, and this number alone does not capture the intellectual loss of individual departures, and the Provost’s Office is doing a study of the reasons individual faculty give for leaving. At this point, it appears that the motives are very diverse and exhibit no dominant pattern.

Diversity

You know, the Provost’s Initiative on Minority Issues (PIMI) has been working over the past few years and is now completing its mandate. PIMI has made a number of recommendations, which we have begun to implement. Last autumn the President and I sent a letter arguing the case for the Metropolitan Educational Television mission as a University. In 2004–05 the efforts in faculty and student recruiting have shown improved results, and we are inviting to suggest candidates.

Professor Ken Warren, who was instrumen-tal in formulating the recommendations of PIMI.

Women’s and Family Issues

I want to follow up on last year’s report by summarizing some initiatives. First, the University is proceeding with a program to cooperate and provide financial support to local day-care providers in order to develop child care programs for infants and toddlers. The aim is to have University-supported places available for infants and toddlers at local centers within the next eighteen months. Second, Dean Robert Fefferman and Associate Provost Mary Harvey collaborated with faculty over the summer to write a grant proposal for the National Science Foundation ADVANCE Program to promote more women scientists. The development of the proposal generated several ideas that will be implemented regardless of the outcome at NSF.

Community

The University continues to support numerous initiatives in the surrounding neighborhoods, perhaps the most important and visible of which is the Urban Education Initiative. UEI brings together five elements with the common purpose of improving public education in the city of Chicago and the country. The five include the Center for Urban School Improvement (USI), the Community Schools Program at the School of Social Service Administration, the Consortium on Chicago School Research, a new academic Committee on Education, and a package of programs in the Office of Community and Government Affairs. The aim is to bring together the highest quality research on education with practical involvement in the public school system. As you know, the Urban Education Initiative that research will produce knowledge to identify the most effective practices for urban education. The empirical results are already very promising. Our charter school, North Kenwood/Oakland, is achieving results with a very economically disadvantaged population that exceeded Chicago Public Schools averages in all areas and state averages in many. The consortium is producing the most respected assessments in the country of student performance in an urban school district. These successes and others have drawn national attention as the most interesting experiment in urban education by a university and, as such, have attracted major gifts from foundations and private donors. Much remains to be done. This autumn the University has opened its second public grade school at 37th and Cottage Grove. The plan is to open three more, including a high school. The academic Committee on Education is off to a great start with the recruitment of Stephen Raudenbush, who will work with colleagues in the Urban Education Initiative. As President Randel wrote, no issue is more pressing for the nation than public education, and the University of Chicago has an opportunity to make a decisive contribution.

Planning and Space

Last year’s report gave details on the Campus Master Plan extension. That effort was completed a year ago, presented to campus
constituencies, and approved by the Trusteess. The plan covers the next fifteen years and will undergo adaptation to changing circumstances. Implementation is underway. Following the move of the Graduate School of Business into these new facilities, Rosenwald, Stuart, and Walker were refurbished as the new home of the Departments of Economics, English, and Philosophy, as well as the Collge Admissions Office, the Humanities Dean’s Office, and classrooms. The current renovation of the first floor of Harper will remake that space into classrooms, yielding a total of eighteen incremental classrooms for the College and divisions. On the West Campus the Center for Integrative Science (formerly the Interdivisional Research Building) has been completed, a facility that will enable exciting discoveries at the intersection of the biological and physical sciences.

On the drawing boards now are four other large projects to facilitate research and student life on campus in the future. The first is the addition to the Regenstein Library. After a long period of planning and discussion, the decision was made to build on land adjacent to Regenstein a high-density, rapid-retrieval system. This on-site option will keep the materials immediately accessible. Since the addition will likely be filled with journals and serials whose contents are listed online, the loss of browsing should not be a serious disadvantage. The addition will include a reading room for use of the materials and an area for the important work of conservation of the collection. For more details, see http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/reg/addition/. Regenstein, with its depth of collection and ease of access, has been one of the great research tools in the world for humanists and social scientists over the past generation. The planned addition should maintain its special advantages.

Part of the challenge in the planning effort was the unparalleled rapidity with which the means of dissemination of knowledge have been changing. In conjunction with the addition of physical space, a task force is now planning how to configure the current building to serve the University in the future. If you have views, please contact the task force chair, Andrew Abbott.

The second major project is the construction of a new laboratory building for the clinical sciences. The design of the Center for Biomedical Discovery is nearing completion, and construction will begin soon at the corner of 57th and Drexel. The new building is needed because the renovation of the older buildings south of 57th Street would be too costly and inefficient, and would leave us with less-than-optimal wet labs. The older buildings will be reno vated for more appropriate uses.

The third project is the renovation for the Division of the Physical Sciences of Searle and the Research Institutes. Unlike the space for the Division of the Biological Sciences, the layout of these buildings can accommodate twenty-first-century science, but they are aging and in need of renewal of their infrastructures. Design of the renovation has begun with a view to construction over the next few years.

The final major project on the drawing board is aimed to improve student life. The Shoreland dormitory has housed a generation of College students who have appreciated the independence of apartment living. But the condition of the building and the recent city ordinances regulating facades would make it very expensive to do the necessary maintenance (upwards of $50 million). The decision was made to sell the Shoreland to a developer (who will return it to its original purpose of high-class apartments) and to build a new dormitory on the South Campus. This is one of several developments that will enrichen that area of campus in the coming years.

This is a partial list of the physical changes underway on the campus. For a full description of progress on the Campus Master Plan, see http://www.uchicago.edu/docs/mp-site/constructions/. The project is large and expensive—the four projects above will in total cost more than $350 million—but they are all important to the core mission of the University.

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Financial State of the University

Last year ended with the University in a stronger financial position, though recent reports from other elite research universit ies indicate that our competitive position is no easier. The Chicago Initiative has now raised more than $1.3 billion. The Trustees have recommitted themselves to the goal of $2 billion and have focused on endowment to support students and faculty, our two most important assets. In addition, the value of our existing endowment rose by 18.1 percent in the year ending June 30, 2005. The strong market returns over the last two years will begin to show up in the University’s revenue stream next year. Finally, our financial planning should be improved through a new ten-year planning model developed over the past year.

The Coming Year

The central administration currently is preparing for the ten-year reaccreditation review by the North Central Association (NCA) and for the competitive contract renewal for the management of Argonne National Laboratory (ANL).

The reaccreditation process entails (1) the collection of information to demonstrate that the University meets basic institutional standards related to education and administration, and (2) an in-depth analysis of a special topic, in our case the University’s research infrastructure. A group of faculty and administrators has spent the past year gathering data on our research infrastructure (ranging from the Library to laboratories to information technology) and reflecting on our decision-making in setting priorities. The team of external evaluators will visit campus in early February, and the report will be publicly available thereafter. Some of you may be asked to speak with the team.

As you know, the federal Department of Energy (DOE) has required for the first time that the University compete for the contract to manage ANL. Our relationship with Argonne has become increasingly integral to the University’s scientific research, and the winning of the contract correspondingly important. Vice-President for Research Thomas Rosenbaum is leading the large and highly complex effort to assemble the University’s proposal to be submitted in the winter. As part of our effort to extend the University’s value to ANL and DOE, we have recruited Northwestern University and the University of Illinois to join the Board of Governors and to participate in a Science Policy Council. The Department of Energy’s decision is expected next summer.

Obviously, the coming year will be an important one for the University. I hope that it turns out to be productive for all members of the University community.

Richard P. Saller is the Edward L. Ryerson Distinguished Service Professor in the Departments of History, Classical Languages & Literatures, and New Testament & Early Christian Literature, Committee on the Ancient Mediterranean World, and the College, and Provost of the University.
The 480th Convocation
Address: “The Fun Index”

By Richard A. Shweder

I wonder if you remember the “fun index.” It was a ranking of 300 American universities by the students who attended them, arranged in order by fun per student. It was compiled by three researchers from the University of Chicago and the University of Arizona. It was based on surveys of students who attended these universities, asking them to rate their experiences on a scale of 0 to 100, with 100 being the highest possible rating. The “fun index” was designed to measure the overall quality of the college experience, taking into account factors such as academic rigor, social life, student-faculty interaction, and campus facilities.

The fun index was considered a revolutionary approach to ranking colleges, since it was based on student surveys rather than on factors such as standardized test scores, faculty reputation, or research output. It quickly became a popular topic of discussion among students, parents, and educators, and it sparked a debate about the importance of non-academic factors in evaluating the quality of a college.

However, the fun index was not without its critics. Some argued that it was too subjective and that it did not take into account important academic factors. Others questioned the validity of using student surveys as a measure of college quality, since students’ perceptions might be influenced by their own personal experiences and biases.

In the end, the fun index was widely criticized and largely ignored by the mainstream media. It is not surprising that it did not have a long-lasting impact, as it was based on a single survey conducted over a decade ago. Nevertheless, it remains an interesting example of how student perspectives can be used to evaluate the quality of a college experience.

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and influential official policy statement about our institution's conception of academic freedom. It is known as the Kalven Committee Report. It was written in 1967 by a faculty committee that included the historian John Hope Franklin, the future Nobel Prize-wining, economist George Stigler, and faculty from all the academic divisions in the University. The committee was chaired by Harry Kalven, Jr., who was a professor in our Law School. Kalven was a Socratic eminence and a brilliant stylist, who wrote a seminal book called A Worthy Tradition: Freedom of Speech in America.

The Kalven Committee Report describes a fundamental aim of the University of Chicago as follows: “A university faithful to its mission will provide enduring challenges to social values, policies, practices, and institutions. By design and by effect, it is the institution which creates discontent with the existing social arrangements and proposes new ones. In brief, a good university, like Socrates, will be upsetting.”

In the service of that mission (and of our worthy tradition), the report points to two sacred (and closely linked) University of Chicago principles: “institutional neutrality” and “faculty and student autonomy.” The University as an institution is cautioned against taking any collective stance on the social and political issues of the day, out of respect for the autonomy of its faculty and students, out of respect for those individuals in our disputatious community who may embrace an unpopular or politically incorrect point of view.

The academic freedom ideals defined by Harry Kalven, John Hope Franklin, George Stigler, and others are extraordinarily difficult to uphold and defend. There are many powerful forces in our contemporary society (both inside and outside the academy) that threaten the principles of student and faculty autonomy and institutional neutrality at the increasingly timid, cowed, and restrained universities and colleges of America. And I don’t just mean the USA Patriot Act. Those who love Kalven’s report in principle don’t always love it in practice; for example, when they want the University (or the Office of the President) to take a collective stance in support of their own favorite social or political cause, or cultural hero. And not everyone loves the report, even in principle; for example, one finds some members of our own community arguing (as do some politicians and bureaucrats in Washington) that conducting research is an indulgence (or a favor) and not a right. There are even those in the academy these days who believe that any student or faculty member who talks to human beings as part of their research should be required to have his or her project approved in advance by an official institutional licensing board (the so-called Institutional Review Board), in part to guarantee that no one asks questions that are too upsetting to some. The T’ang dynasty did not last forever and neither will the spirit of our great university, unless all of us (faculty, students, alumni, and academic administrators) honor it, defend it, and guard its gates.

Dear students, friends, colleagues, kith, and kin. On this celebratory occasion, when one reflects on our deepest values and looks with hope towards a glorious future, it is thrilling—indeed it is a great and deeply satisfying form of fun—for the faculty to be able to congratulate you on becoming graduates of the University of Chicago and to welcome you as heirs to this worthy tradition.”

Standing up here in this wooden box suspended in space in Rockefeller Chapel, I confess to feeling a bit like some Puritan preacher of old. This is a bit worrisome. For I am sure you remember how H. L. Mencken defined Puritanism: “The haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy” (or shall we say “having fun”?): So permit me to reach for a climactic antidote.

Some years ago, in 1993, around the time that the University of Chicago was ranked number 300 on the fun index, I delivered an Aims of Education address in this building (which is the architectural symbol of our self-esteem), welcoming new students to our campus. The very first line of that address read as follows: “No one ever died of homesickness” were the most comforting words told to me during my first days at college.” Now it is the year 2005. Homes change. All of our lives move on. History moves on. And here we are together on a graduation day at the University of Chicago, in a very grand and wonderful ceremony, on what is perhaps your final day in this community. And the very last message of this convocation speech, a small piece of avuncular advice (don’t worry, it is not “buy low, sell high”) offered to you by this member of the faculty, with love, with admiration for your accomplishments, and with many hopes for your future (and futures), is this: Make up your own fun index, and then pursue it for life; but also remember to stand up for your convictions—that above all else. It is our way to be number 1. It is the only true way to be number 1.

Richard A. Shweder is the William Claude Reavis Distinguished Service Professor in the Departments of Comparative Human Development and Psychology, Committee on Southern Asian Studies, and the College.

Summary
The 480th convocation was held on Friday, March 18, 2005, in Rockefeller Memorial Chapel. Don Michael Randel, President of the University, presided.

A total of 490 degrees were awarded: 27 Bachelor of Arts in the College, 7 Master of Science in the Division of the Biological Sciences and the Pritzker School of Medicine, 12 Master of Arts in the Division of the Humanities, 17 Master of Science in the Division of the Physical Sciences, 36 Master of Arts in the Division of the Social Sciences, 338 Master of Business Administration in the Graduate School of Business, 6 Master of Liberal Arts in the William B. and Catherine V. Graham School of General Studies, 7 Master of Arts in the School of Social Service Administration, 1 Master of Arts in the Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies, 2 Master of Public Policy in the Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies, 13 Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of the Biological Sciences and the Pritzker School of Medicine, 9 Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of the Humanities, 5 Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of the Physical Sciences, 6 Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of the Social Sciences, 3 Doctor of Philosophy in the Divinity School, and 1 Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Social Service Administration.

Richard A. Shweder, the William Claude Reavis Distinguished Service Professor in the Departments of Comparative Human Development and Psychology, Committee on Southern Asian Studies, and the College, delivered the invocation address, “The Fun Index.”
The 481st Convocation
Address: “Race, Politics, and the Costs of Compromise”

By Cathy Cohen

June 10 and 11, 2005

To the graduates of 2005, let me say that it is an honor to stand before you today to address the history of the University of Chicago at this very important and joyful occasion. I, along with my colleagues, congratulate all of you on your achievement; you are an inspiration to us today! I believe that it is crucial at this time of celebration that we not lose sight of the fact that your extraordinary achievement—securing an exceptional education and graduating from one of the best universities in the world—is an achievement that is not available to all who would choose such a goal.

Institutions around the United States spent much of the past year holding forums, debates, and conferences aimed at commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education decision, in which the United States Supreme Court unanimously struck down legal segregated schools. This decision did not resolve segregation entrenched in the South and across the country.

The Brown decision of May 17, 1954, did not spell the end of segregation. It did not even bring about the end of segregation in public schools, as school districts openly and covertly defied the decision, reasserting what is often called the Brown II decision of May 31, 1955, when the Supreme Court instructed districts to end segregation “as rapidly as the circumstances permit.” For all of its limitations, however, the Brown decision was important because it served as a formal, public marker that Jim Crow segregation, the legal system of racial segregation entrenched in the South and practiced in the North, could and would be successfully challenged.

Thus, the promise of the Brown decision was not limited to ending segregation in public schools or merely securing integration and behavior of themselves and others. They see an open, fair, and much-improved racial society, which they believe allows individuals to advance on their own merit. On the other hand, research shows that African Americans and members of other marginalized racial groups take a more group-centered approach to evaluating politics and progress in this country.

As you doubt learned at the University of Chicago, the facts do not, as promised, always speak for themselves. They often offer contradictory evidence, providing the basis for multiple interpretations of the world. Scholars of racial politics have found evidence of just that—namely, that people from different racial and ethnic groups utilize distinct approaches to evaluating politics and progress in this country.

White Americans, the research suggests, tend to emphasize what they believe are individual characteristics when explaining policies and past and present events. They often offer contradictory evidence, providing the basis for multiple interpretations of the world. Scholars of racial politics have found evidence of just that—namely, that people from different racial and ethnic groups utilize distinct approaches to evaluating politics and progress in this country.

Brown was but one decision. Other events in the fifties and sixties made this period one of the most important eras in American political history. The Brown decision was not meant to signal a much-improved racial society, which they believe allows individuals to advance on their own merit. On the other hand, research shows that African Americans and members of other marginalized racial groups take a more group-centered approach to evaluating racial politics. They most often prioritize structural conditions and shrinking opportunities in their explanations of behaviors and attitudes.

For African Americans who routinely live with twice the unemployment rate of white Americans, who continuously confront residential segregation and consequently less-than-adequate public schools, the issue is not merit but opportunity.

The American political system operates as a monolith, espousing one set of beliefs and analyzing issues from one point of view. My own scholarship has focused on just such divisions in black communities. However, though such differences exist in communities, when researchers look at political trends in public opinion we find that individuals from different racial groups view the world in markedly different ways.

For example, recent data revealed that the increase in youth voting in 2004 touted by the media and politicians was largely the result of the increase in voting among Latino and African-American youth. These young voters differed in their candidate of choice based on race, with young African Americans and Latinos most often voting for John Kerry and white youth more often casting a vote for George W. Bush.

Some scholars argue that the increase in voting, independent of the racial divisions, indicates that the promise of Brown and of a fully functional democracy is within our grasp—that we have reached a peak in our history where all citizens, regardless of race, are engaged in debate, where they participate so as to ensure that their interests will be protected and represented by the state, and where they believe that the simple act of voting is their responsibility and will have an impact.

Unfortunately, reality is never so simple, for other trends and policies pose a direct threat not only to the promise of Brown but also to the promise of a fully realized democracy in the United States. Researchers note, for example, that our nation has the highest incarceration rate in the world—ten times higher than other Western democracies. We hold over 25 percent of the world’s population of incarcerated people in U.S. jails or prisons at a cost of some $50 billion. Today, according to data from the U.S. Department of Justice, there are over two million Americans in jail or prison.

One consequence is that nearly one-eighth of African-American males in this country are not allowed to vote because they are incarcerated or have served time for a felony offense. In a number of states, disenfranchisement continues even after prison. We must ask ourselves what policies that strip away from citizens the most basic of democratic resources—the right to vote—mean for the functioning of our democracy? What does it mean for how resources are allocated? What does it mean for the validity of local and national elections? And what does it mean, as Ellison wrote, for the nation’s ability to acknowledge—and, I would add, value—the human dignity and citizenship of black and other marginalized groups?

Fifty years after Brown, I am reminded of education’s potential to help transform the world every time I encounter a group of politically committed undergraduates, every time I interact with graduate students who detail new ways of seeing and understanding the world, and every time a young black child who lives in the neighborhoods west and south of our campus comes to know of the University of Chicago as one of the world’s greatest institutions and not as a policed landscape with seemingly little relevance to his or her life. The promise of Brown every time that same young child comes to imagine him or herself sitting where you are or standing where I am today.

You have been privy to one of the most intense and energetic intellectual communities in the world. But I hope during your time here you may come to address the real intellect is most powerful when it is mindful of the lives it can change, the people it can empower, and the societies it can transform. The litigants of Brown and the others challenging segregation fifty years ago encountered a country that legally and in practice declared black people and other people of color to be second-class citizens. Even in that context, the litigants of Brown spoke boldly with the aim of transform-
that many adults want to expunge rather than embrace. Is it perhaps that there is nothing serious to say? Or, could it be that he’s concerned that voices within each one of us, as well as those from others, block some apertures into serious ideas—or, for this audience, an aperture into serious business?

Deliberate silliness is paradoxical because it puts us in control: When we are silly, we can view the world through different lenses of our own choosing. Silliness frees the imagination, allowing us to see possibilities not constrained by the need to please someone or get everything right to pass someone else’s standardized test. Being silly can mean testing the view on our own terms—trying a zoom lens, or a fish-eye lens, or a panoramic lens.

Now, the imaginative lens stands in sharp contrast with a technical perspective, which values objectivity, neutrality, and impersonal ways of perceiving. The American poet Wallace Stevens contrasts these two lenses with each other in his poem “Six Significant Landscapes.” In the last stanza he writes:

Rationalists, wearing square hats,
Think, in square rooms,
Looking at the floor,
Looking at the ceiling,
They confine themselves
to right-angled triangles.

If they tried rhomboids,
Cones, waving ellipses—
As, in the dream of the ellipse of the half moon—
Rationalists would wear sombreros.

Stevens begins his poem in a linear world defined by walls, ceiling, floor—creating a sense of being confined. And then there is a transformation into new shapes—the half moon, a sombrero—square hats like the mortarboards you’re wearing today—put aside. It’s as if he recognized that while a fish-eye lens, for instance, would ruin a passport photo, it might very well do something artful with the shadow cast by a sombrero.

Indeed, being silly can be like posing before fun house mirrors to view ourselves in multiple ways. In their silly ways, children delight in make believe—in playing “let’s pretend.” On any given day when I was young, I could be a magician, then a pirate, and later Superman (that is until gravity took hold).

Regrettably, you are probably past the days of “let’s pretend.” But rather than searching for that one identity, I propose to you that in shaping our careers we can benefit from multiple identities—some of them as young as childhood, and only one as old as today.

The quintessential “self-made” businessman Benjamin Franklin was considered considerably larger than this single identity. His multiple personae, in fact, are the embodiment of a trickster—that figure in society

that “rattles the cage” in order to challenge cultural conventions. Franklin entered the stage at age forty-two, writing an elderly woman criticizing the hypocrisy of the elite in Massachusetts. He wrote in London newspapers as a Briton (a London manufacturer) and a New Englander (an American). He knew precisely what identity to bring on stage to reach his intended audience.

I tend to agree with the Chicago Symphony’s Daniel Barenboim who has suggested that having multiple identities is not only possible but, indeed, is something to which to aspire.

If these small, but powerful, voices within each of us don’t kill the imagination, the words of others can. Ideas are sometimes put down not because they are really foolish but, rather, because they threaten widely held beliefs. In other cases, the put-downs have more to do with the messenger. The social psychologist Dan Wegner divides the world into two types of people: the bumbler who enjoy going through life trying to get something done and the pointers who never do anything themselves but love to point out the bumblers’ blunders. The word “silly” is a favorite weapon in the pointers’ vocabulary.

Now I have to acknowledge that many, if not most, ideas labeled “silly” are just that—silly. But a small number of ideas judged to be foolish do mature and do impact the world—FedEx, eBay, even Silly Putty®. Low probability outcomes such as these pose a dilemma for organizations because a large number of tries must take place, most of which will be unsuccessful and deemed, after the fact, to have been bad investments. (It’s a dilemma reminiscent of a long-standing belief in business that about 90 percent of what we do is wasted, the only problem being that we don’t know which half.)

Not unlike businesses, but in a more permissive economy, the best universities are places that tolerate, even encourage, serious dialogue about ideas that many would consider silly. Even though new ideas can be dismissive, Stuart Tove, now an emeritus professor of English at this university, once opined that more dumb things happen at a university than at any other accredited institution. In a 1989 convocation address, Tove described the best faculty and students as smart, self-confident people—even a bit arrogant—who take big risks that stretch themselves to the edge and beyond, much like great athletes. And it’s because of this quality of mind that they are also capable of pulling their intellectual hamstrings, making big mistakes and fools of themselves.

The University of Chicago has a particular place in its heart for those who seriously pursue risky ideas. Two examples on the research front immediately come to mind.

The late Professor Subramanyan Chandrasekhar, who won the Nobel Prize in 1983, was severely criticized by the then prominent astronomer Sir Bernard Lyttleton for his work on the evolution of stars. Ed- dingtone tore into Chandra’s work—a re- markable discovery—calling it “utter nonsense.” Chandra was then opined that there should be a “law of nature to prevent a star from behaving in this absurd way.” The audience laughed.

Eventually what was labeled absurd would be vindicated; his insight had been correct and Chandra would be accepted.

In the Graduate School of Business, George Steigler used to tell the story of Ronald Coase’s first visit to the University, to persuade his dissertation committee that when there are no transaction costs, the assignment of legal rights has no effect on the way economic resources would be used. Sti- ger wondered such a fine economist could make such an obvious mistake. So, believing that the idea was silly enough to debate, twenty Chicago economists met with Coase, Steigler described the two-hour discussion as exhilarating, with the vote going from twenty to one against Coase at the beginning to twenty-one for Coase at the end. Ronald Coase received the Nobel Prize in 1991.

Standing in this location with Harper Library as my backdrop, I simply must acknowledge the audacious founder of this university, William Rainey Harper, who crafted a vision of a great research university built in a swamp on the Midway, freed faculty to do research, doubled the top salary scale, admitted women and Jews, initiated the quarter system, and created high-quality extension programs outside of Hyde Park. Some labeled the University a veritable monstrosity: “A foreign intrusion into the life of the city.” “Harper’s folly.” Despite the ridicule, this institution surely benefited from entertaining what some “pointers” thought was a silly, fantastic notion.

Now, some final thoughts for your bottom line:

First, don’t take things and yourself too seriously. Keep in mind William James’s counsel:

“Our errors are surely not such awfully solemn things. In a world where we are so certain to incur them in spite of all our caution, a certain lightness of heart seems healthier than this excessive nerv- ousness on their behalf.”

Second, engage in some actions that others may find silly. Take a train across this great country—you’ll see things that you would never see from an airplane or the interstate. Accept a cut in pay to do work you love. Stroll across the monumental Brooklyn Bridge (it’s the chief engineer John Roebling’s birthday today).

Third, surprise yourself and others by doing something silly every day. Tackle some project with the goal of being in- efficient. Argue a side of an issue that’s opposed to what you believe. Plan to be spontaneous tomorrow.

Focus your zoom lens on my silly reason for interviewing here and how it turned out to be an aperture into a life’s work more serious than I could have envisioned. I know that Katherine Graham had the same sense of fulfillment in the College. Finally, and most genuinely, I want to congratulate you on your accomplish- ments. We hope you will stay in touch with those of us still in Hyde Park. We will talk tomorrow. Goodnight, Chicago. What would you say if I say that, on that note, I’m being far more serious than silly.
Why me?

I’ll admit that was my first thought when I learned that your class had chosen me to speak at today’s convocation. After all, I’m too young to have much wisdom to impart. But then I thought to myself, “The only thing I am capable of is to see you as a potential convocation speaker means that maybe I’m not all that young. So I did what any self-respecting Grad student in Business (GSB) alumn would do—some quantitative research.

Imagine my surprise to discover that the average age of a GSB conversation speaker is fifty-six years old. Fifty-six years old? Took me a week to get over that one. I’m far from fifty-six, and I should warn you that I’m serious. As you consider your future, and the secrets to success today—because I don’t have them. But I do know one twenty-first century reality that can’t be found in a textbook or taught in a lecture hall: and that’s what it means to be a business leader today.

Since you entered the GSB, you haven’t exactly been bombarded by the best role models for good business leadership. Enron and others have unfortunately become the new poster child for senior management behavior. Frankly, it’s devaluing our profession and leading to higher new pressures on executives.

The industry—investment banking—was a very change is the only true constant. It’s hap...
certain thing—we will remember our graduation. We won’t remember who sat next to us, we won’t remember the time to the alma mater; and we most certainly won’t remember the speeches. But for some odd reason—forty, sixty years down the line—the experience of receiving a symbolic piece of paper will remain ingrained in our minds.

But if we remember anything else, hope it is how intellectually engaged this school has forced us to be and how it has inspired us to think critically about almost everything. From the passionate arguments we had about elections and Plato to that masochistic nostalgia we feel every time summer break drags on too long, the fond memories that defined our quixotic existence here at the University of Chicago are the ones that I hope linger the longest.

Last weekend, we had a rare opportunity to see the future. As we tried to escape the stress of school, hundreds of alumni converged on campus to remember it. They went to classes; they partied; they spent time with old friends. They tried, if only for a moment, to be like us. But you don’t come back to your alma mater just to be a poser, and you don’t come back to donate money for overpriced food. You come back because deep down you know that something amazing—something worth remembering—happened to you here. You come back because this place changed your life.

And while I don’t expect everyone here to come to reunions, I hope we forever share some of the memories those alumni feared losing. Because over the past few years, our lives did change. We spoke differently, and we certainly slept differently. We viewed the world differently, and we lived differently. Even if we never live—or want to live—like this again, I hope we never forget it.

Thank you all for everything, and best wishes to the alma mater; and we most certainly want to live—like this again, I hope we never forget it.

Franklin Vance McMullan received a bachelor of arts degree during the convocation. Her major area of study was Biological Sciences.

Remarks
By Elliot Benjamin Tapper

Good morning, friends. If you don’t recognize me, I’ll refresh your memory. Think back, back to Hum class. Yes, I was “that guy.” I know you’ll always remember that overly enthusiastic guy. You know, the one who always had something “great” to say.

Well, I thought I’d start my speech by proclaiming that I intend to remain “that guy” for the rest of my life. In fact, I’d like to proclaim that I intend to remain “that overly enthusiastic guy. You know, the one that I hope will always be at your back, shouting things like, “I’m going to eat lunch!” I know that sounds like a line—the experience of receiving a symbolic piece of paper will remain ingrained in our minds.

If there is any point to my speech, it’s that I hope we won’t lose our enthusiasm. Please remember that we cared about real issues. We questioned our assumptions and formed the most educated and thoughtful opinions. When we leave the University of Chicago, we won’t have a chance to push us to challenge our convictions, we could grow indifferent or apathetic. We may find ourselves referring to arguments about our nature or the philosophical implications of our beliefs as “so U of C.” But I hope that doesn’t mean we will think the fruits of our studies are meant to remain on the quads. We hear that given the breadth of opportunity we face, there is no logical next step, but the lessons of our four years have provided us with sufficient material to chart the right course whatever our choice may be.

We once organized petitions, lobbied our representatives, volunteered through-out the city, stood up for human rights and fought against the evils of the world—like hunger, tyranny, empire, Citibank, and Taco Bell. But I fear that we will find ourselves without the time to commit or, worse, that we’ll think our struggles for justice and truth were best left to our youth. I believe we accomplished a lot of good for humanity during our time here. But the nagging suspicion hits me that maybe we were but one more a cappella concert away from ending genocide.

There’s a lot left for us to do. Just as long as we remain true to our Chicago roots, we’ll continue to do the right things.

Elliot Benjamin Tapper received a bachel or of arts degree during the convocation. His major area of study was Biological Sciences.

Remarks
By Carlee Kathryn Tressel

I grew up with a dad who is a college football coach, so I spent a lot of time around a stadium. I would climb the bleachers, challenge my brother and sister to foot races on the Astroturf field, and carefully scribe inspirational quotations on pieces of cardboard in an attempt to imitate the motivational signs posted around the football offices. They fascinated me, but there was one particular sign that I didn’t quite understand.

A long, granite tunnel connected the field to the locker rooms. It was an echoy, in-between feeling place, and you couldn’t miss the massive sign that hung overhead. It read: “What are you going to do now?”

My brother, sister, and I would read it and shout things like, “I’m going to eat lunch!” or “I’m going to beat you to the bottom of this tunnel!” As I got older, I understood that the question was meant to remind the players to be responsible for their actions in the future. I’ve witnessed it, and I think about how they could improve their performances. Now as I leave the University of Chicago, I find myself in another kind of in-between place, asking myself the same question. What am I going to do now?

There was an easy answer after high school. With an offer from the University of Chicago, I just had to go. I felt like I would go to college. At this point, however, there is no given next step. The choice of what to do after college is not necessarily obvious. For scheduled and driven people like us, the prospect of answering “I don’t know” to “What are you going to do now?” is uncomfortable.

But at the same time, not knowing exactly what is next can be freeing. It leaves the possibility of finding out what we truly want to do, and there is no deadline for figuring that out. One of our classmates told me that she had spoken to her grandmother recently, reporting that, no, she didn’t have a job yet, and she wasn’t sure what she was going to do next year. Her grandmother had replied, “That’s okay. I don’t know what I’m doing next year either.”

The question on the sign is also an invitation to enjoy the immediate moment: What am I going to do now?

So, right now, I am going to be grateful for the people who got us here.

Thank you, Chicago faculty, staff, administrators, and advisers of all kinds. Thank you, teammates.

Thank you, roommates. You had enough faith to fall asleep that first night of college though everything was unfamiliar and though our beds were only three feet apart. Thank you for being different than me—so much so that I wrote my first roommate a letter to ask her how to pronounce her name, and I spelled mine phonetically just in case it also looked difficult. Thank you, friends, for making sure ambitious personal agendas didn’t always always prevail. Thank you just for being around or for talking for hours—despite pressing assignments, caffeine crashes, or the light of dawn.

Thank you, family and parents. Thank you for giving us support and the curiosity to want to find out what we could do.

We graduates are not the same people we were when we parted ways with you at 57th and University, but here the bagpipes played.

Thank you for handling the growth and changes in us with grace and an encouraging spirit. You are the reason we made it here.

And finally, thank you to the Class of 2005 because nothing in my experience had prepared me for the diversity of my first few weeks here. So what are we going to do now? I don’t know. But with this group, I am not worried.

Carlee Kathryn Tressel received a bachelor of arts degree during the convocation. Her major area of study was English Language & Literature.

Llewellyn John and Harriet Manchester Quantrell Awards for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching

The University’s Llewellyn John and Harriet Manchester Quantrell Awards for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching were presented during the 48st convocation on June 11, 2005.

Upon the recommendation of John W. Boyer, Dean of the College, and Richard P. Saller, Provost, Don Michael Randel, President, designated the following winners.

László Babai
Professor, Departments of Computer Science and Mathematics, and the College of Computer Science and the College of Computer Science.

The candidate was presented by David MacQueen, Professor, Department of Computer Science and the College; and David Cohn, Department of Computer Science.

László Babai’s research straddles mathematics and computer science. His papers on graph isomorphism, communication complexity, combinatorics, computational group theory, lower bounds, and graph theory have had a deep impact on the field. He is particularly noted for developing the highly influential concept of “interactive proof systems,” for which he won the international Gödel Prize in 1993. Babai joined the University in 1984, shortly after the creation of the Department of Computer Science, and was instrumental in building a world-class theory group here.

Babai has earned a legendary reputation as a great teacher of theoretical computer science and mathematics. His courses on discrete mathematics, the theory of algorithms, and combinatorics have long formed the core of the computer science curriculum. In keeping with the distinguished tradition of mathematics education in his native Hungary, Babai puts creative problem solving at the center of his teaching philosophy. He feels that mathematics is not something to be memorized; it is something to be discovered—and he inspires his students, even the less motivated, to do just that. He inspires students through contagious enthusiasm for his subject, his eclectic treatment of topics and methods, and his genuine concern that all his students effectively master both the concepts and the problem-solving techniques of mathematics. His courses are notoriously demanding, but—because of his devotion to the subject, his humor, and the respect he has for his students—success—even students who struggle come away with a rewarding experience that they often see as the highlight of their undergraduate education.

Citation: Throughout the history of computer science at Chicago, you have challenged and inspired students to master and appreciate the rigor and power of mathematical problem solving.

Dr. Dorothy A. Hanck
Professor, Department of Medicine and the College

The candidate was presented by Dr. Joe G. N. Garcia, the Lowell T. Gogebull Professor and Chairman, Department of Medicine.

Dr. Hanck is one of the leading cellular and molecular cardiac electrophysiologists in the world. She has performed elegant, seminal work that has produced key insights into the structure and function of the sodium channel. She has developed and utilized cutting-edge tools in molecular biology and electrophysiology to move the field forward. Her discoveries have tremendous importance and relevance to cardiac pharmacology and ultimately to the design of new, targeted therapeutics. Dr. Hanck is also one of the University of Chicago’s most visible and respected educators at many levels. One
of her students said, “Dr. Hanck embodies all of the aspects of an ideal professor... and a great collector of teaching, professionalism, intelligence, compassion, and a good sense of humor.”

Dr. Hanck’s teaching credentials are superb, reflecting her deep commitment to excellence in education at all levels. In the College, Dr. Hanck served for several years as the Program Director for the Undergraduate Specialization in Neurosci- ence. Undergraduate biology majors who are interested in the neurosciences turn to her as an adviser and organizer of a specific program of courses. Since 1994, she has been the course director of the highly regarded course in cellular neuroscience. In addition to delivering many of the course lectures, Dr. Hanck has revised the laboratory component of the course to include state-of-the-art molecular biology and electrophysiology techniques, as well as innovative computer models of her own design. She also teaches a popular introductory pharmacology course for undergraduates.

Dr. Hanck teaches extensively at the graduate-student level as well, and has been a respected teacher in the medical school and in the cardiology fellowship program. In many of these activities, she bridges the biological and physical sciences with wisdom and grace. Dr. Hanck has taught a large number of undergraduate, graduate, and medical students in her laboratory. Many of these students have gone on to further graduate work in science or to academic careers.

Dr. Hanck’s devotion to teaching has led to many significant leadership roles in science education at the University of Chicago. In addition, she serves as a role model for women in science, and she has been an active member of the Committee on Women in Medicine in our own Department of Medicine.

As another of her students has said, “Whenever I mention her name to students who have taken her classes in the past, they immediately exclaim ‘Dottie Hanck! She’s amazing!’” Dr. Hanck is an extraordinary teacher and scientist.

Citation: Your passion and deep commitment to excellence in education at all levels exemplifies the qualities of an ideal professor. The beneficiaries of your superb talents are deeply grateful.

Dr. Stephen C. Meredith

Associate Professor, Departments of Pathology and Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, Committee on Immunology, and the College

The candidate was presented by Dr. Vinay Kumar, the Alice Hogge and Arthur A. Baez Professor, Department of Pathology and the Chairman, Department of Pathology.

The word “unique” comes to mind when thinking of Steve Meredith and his career choices. He is a physician-scientist and teacher. The uniqueness started with his own education. In high school, he was already an accomplished debater, major not only in biology but also in English literature. He graduated cum laude from Brandeis University. After completing his M.D. degree at Washington University in St. Louis, Steve joined the pathology residency program at the University of Chicago. After receiving his Ph.D. in 1982, he was appointed Assistant Professor of Pathology and Director of the Division of the Biological Sciences.

As a pathologist, Steve Meredith is unique in that in his morning he may be super- vising an autopsy to determine the cause of death of a patient and in the afternoon he may be conducting experiments utilizing solid-state NMR to unravel the structure of amyloid, widely believed to underlie the causation of Alzheimer’s disease. His landmark studies on amyloid fibrillogenesis in 1998 led initially to skepticism because this work was “well before its time.” In the ensuing years, it has been replicated in many other laboratories and has led to a paradigm shift in the understanding of how amyloid fibrils are organized. The implications of these studies are immense since they may lead to the development of agents that inhibit the formation of amyloid fibrils.

Over the past two decades, Steve has also distinguished himself as a master teacher. That he carries a very heavy load of teaching in the Division of the Biological Sciences is not surprising since Steve is a physician-scientist and an investigative pathologist. Of the more than a dozen courses that he teaches in the medical school and in the biomedical graduate programs, several were created by him. The crown jewel amongst these, called Cellular Pathology and Immunology, is taught almost entirely by Steve Meredith, and it drifts into aspiring physicians the fundamental mechanisms of human diseases. His excellence in teaching medical students has been recognized many times with teaching awards.

What is unusual about Steve Meredith is his love and dedication to teaching humanities within the College’s Funda- mentals: Issues and Texts program. In this program, Steve has taught courses on James Joyce (Ulysses), St. Thomas Aquinas (Summa Theologica), St. Augustine (The City of God), Thomas Mann (The Magic Mountain), and Dostoevsky (The Brothers Karamazov). While the teaching of humanities may be seen as a diversion by other scientists, Steve views it quite dif- ferently. He has had a lifelong interest in philosophical questions and literature, and to him these questions are at the heart of why he is a scientist. As he has said, “Sci- ence as we know it was once called ‘natural philosophy,’ for good reason.”

Impressed by the intensity and passion with which Steve teaches humanities, a student wrote, “He was able to present his analysis of Karamazov so well with the knowl- edge and insight of a professor of Russian literature and the excitement of someone reading it for the first time.” The student added, “He is one of the best teachers I have ever had.”

Steve Meredith is a curious scientist who does research in pathology, in which I believe to be at a very advanced level, finds the time not only to read as much as he teaches, but also to keep up with the latest literature with undergraduates. Speaking with him, I begin to realize that is all done out of love.

Citation: Steve Meredith, your dedication to intellectual inquiry that transcends nar- row academic boundaries and your passion for sharing knowledge with colleagues and students gives definition to the word “professor.”

Holly Marie Swyers

The William J. Friedman and Alicia Brown, the Edward Carson Waller Dis- tinguished Service Professor, Department of English Language & Literature, Committee on African-American Studies and the History of Culture, and the College

Holly Swyers is an accomplished scholar in the field of cultural anthropology. Anthro- pology today has moved beyond earlier study of cultures other than our own and begun to focus on those practices and meanings that shape our own understanding of self and others. Swyers’s work exemplifies this new emphasis in anthropology.

Her dissertation research was founded on ethnographic observations of a large, urban high school and a reading of the literature on educational reform across the past century. Swyers’s results highlighted the contradictions between preservation of national traditions and the changing educational practices presented in a liberal democracy confronting the problems of globalization. She showed how the ideol- ogy of school reform becomes entangled in a set of contradictions regarding our place in the larger world. In a more recent study of the “bleacher bums” in a major league baseball park, Swyers deepens her study of the beliefs and practices people use to make a place for themselves in a community within a liberal democracy confronting globalization.

In her teaching as in her scholarly study, Holly Swyers is the very ideal of the teacher-scholar. She brings her enthusiasm and appreciation for the paradox presented by culture into the classroom. Her dedication to perpetuating the tradition of teaching that extends through class discussions, individual meetings with her students, and close work with students on writing. Her essay topics have become collector’s items, and there is always a long line of students waiting to talk to her dur- ing office hours.

Swyers encourages critical discussion tempered by an understanding of ourselves as members of contemporary society. She is a teacher who helps students to realize an appreciation for the complex- ity of contemporary urban society.

Holly has taken on important leader- ship positions in the College. She presently serves as the Co-Chair of the Society of Fellows, where her activism has fostered the vitality of the Society. In the Core course Self, Culture, and Society, Holly leads students in discussion of the management and the pedagogy of the course. In our weekly staff meetings, her contributions to our discussions reflect her love of both urban history and learning. She inspires and educates her colleagues just as she does her students.

Citation: Enthusiastic and committed teacher and careful observer of the culture of the classroom, your joy in learning and teaching inspires your students to read critically and to appreciate the complexity of contemporary society.
of just how powerful the act of teaching can be.

Faculty Awards for Excellence in Graduate Teaching

Four Faculty Awards for Excellence in Graduate Teaching were presented during the 481st convocation on June 10, 2005. These awards, established in 1986, recognize and honor faculty members for their effective graduate teaching, including leadership in the development of programs and a special ability to encourage, influence, and work with graduate students.

Nominations and recommendations for the Faculty Awards for Excellence in Graduate Teaching are made by faculty and graduate students; selection is by a faculty committee appointed by the Provost.

Andrew Abbott

The Gustavus F. and Ann M. Swift Distinguished Service Professor, Department of Sociology and the College

Andrew Abbott mentors more graduate students than just about anyone in the Department of Sociology. This is not because he has large research grants and hires a horde of research assistants. It is not because, pied piper-like, he has a trendy topic that many want to imitate. His students are typically not his research assistants, and they work on a diversity of topics that fit under no single rubric. Drawing from letters on his behalf, he draws diverse students because he “checks in, congratulates, encourages, shares of himself, and provides practical information.” His congratulations to students include noting some milestone that they achieved in the previous quarter.

He draws students because of his willingness to provide quick feedback and suggestions for enlarging a project, his high, requiring additional reading on his part, that is not part of his own research agenda. He “provides research opportunities, and helps with funding and career placement.” He “helps bring out the best in his students, rather than dictating what they should do or be.” He takes students and student work seriously, and understands the sometimes fragile ego that can come with being a graduate student.” His high standards of mentorship and the successes they bring in the quality of dissertations and subsequent job placements show what graduate education can be at its best.

Citation: Andrew Abbott helps bring out the best in his students, rather than dictating what they should do or be. His high standards of mentorship and the successes they bring in the quality of dissertations and subsequent job placements show what graduate education can be at its best.

Lauren Berlant

The Hoffmann Family Professor, Department of English Language & Literature, Committee on African & African American Studies, and the College

The candidate was presented by Elizabeth Helsinger, the John Mattei Manly Distinguished Service Professor, Department of English Language & Literature and Art History, and the College; and Chairperson, Department of English Language & Literature.

Lauren Berlant is an extraordinary graduate teacher and mentor. An innovative scholar with ready wit and contagious energy, she is also an unfailing advocate for students, committed to the collaborative pursuit of knowledge in the classroom, who mentors graduate students even in fields far from her own. She treats her students as adult professionals and colleagues, inspiring them to live up to her high expectations and showing them by inclusion what it is like to be a professor. Her classroom is a stimulating space of surprise and challenge where students experience the “live” quality of her intelligence and are motivated to join the conversation. Out of class these conversations go on for hours, as she guides and goads them to push their thinking even further, to be more critical, to demand more of themselves. Her wit leaves the eager sharpness of her intellect; by getting students to laugh, she helps them to sustain sanity through humor even in the face of personal and political depression.

Alan L. Kolata

The Neukom Family Distinguished Service Professor, Department of Anthropology and the College; and Chairperson, Department of Anthropology

The candidate was presented by Michael D'Andrade, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Committee on the Ancient Mediterranean World, and the College.

Alan Kolata’s reputation as scintillating classroom teacher grows out of his own exemplary practice as scholar. His intense commitment to archaeological fieldwork and to the data sets it generates has led to a style of teaching that, while fully grounded in the material record, also situates such data in the wider social world. The energy with which he creates this close dialogue between material records and social processes has proved extremely compelling to students. Alan Kolata’s commitment to a living, active archaeology allows the class to participate in a forum for critical analyses of the schema theory of culture, a corpus of systems as diverse as the action of enzymes in the cell to the processing of nucleic acids and proteins. This has reshaped our understanding of culture by providing a new model of the transmission of cultural knowledge.

Citation: Amy Dru Stanley’s prize-winning scholar of U.S. history who brings together the diverse fields of legal, gender, economic, and intellectual history. On this occasion, we recognize her for making this prismatic intellectual perspective come alive for her many students, past and present, in the Department of History. Amy Stanley commands enormous respect from her students. It is as if, working with her, they go through a cathartic experience that enables them to emerge purer and stronger. They are also deeply appreciative of her dedication to the needs and interests of students. Amy’s courses are designed with the needs of the students uppermost in her mind. Amy has also shown her dedication to the teaching program in the department as a whole. During her tenure as chair of the undergraduate committee of the Department of History she reorganized the entire program. She succeeded in securing better facilities and remuneration for the graduate student preceptors, increased the enrollment in our major, and made it a model undergraduate program in the social sciences. Amy Dru Stanley demands high intellectual standards from students and, in turn, attends to their most basic intellectual and livelihood requirements. The students and the department appreciate her efforts with deep gratitude.

Citation: Amy Dru Stanley’s intellectual generosity, her accessibility, and her challenging, provocative courses guide and inspire her students to discover their own voices and to reach their full academic and professional potential.

Honorary Degrees

Doctor of Humane Letters

Roy Goodwin D’Andrade

Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Connecticut; Professor Emeritus, Department of Anthropology, University of California, San Diego

The candidate was presented by Tanya Luhmann, the Max Palevsky Professor, Department of Comparative Human Development and the College.

Roy D’Andrade is a cultural anthropologist whose work transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries. He is one of the few scholars who can legitimately claim to have initiated an entire field of research. His major contribution has been to pioneer the schema theory of culture, a corpus of work that has established that cultural knowledge is not transmitted from one generation to another whole and simple, but instead that transitting of anthropology consists of unspecified and implicit schemas that are learned slowly, in the context of social engagement and constrained by ordinary psychological mechanisms.

What makes him so unusual is that he works between the scientific and the humanistic approaches. He has done more to create a bridge between anthropology and psychology than almost any other scholar, and in the process he has initiated research programs in linguistics and cognitive science as well as in anthropology and psychology. Even now he is working to understand in detail the way social context enters the cognitive process. He is a masterful teacher and inspiring interlocutor.

Citation: Interdisciplinary scholar and anthropological scientist, Roy D’Andrade, has expanded our understanding of the cultural influences on the human psyche. With boundless curiosity, enthusiasm, and intellectual verve, he has fundamentally reshaped our understanding of culture by creating a new model of the transmission of cultural knowledge.

Doctor of Science

Carlos J. Bustamente

Howard Hughes Investigator, Luis Alvaro Professor of Physics, and Professor of Molecular & Cell Biology and Chemistry, University of California, Berkeley

The candidate was presented by Stephen Kent, Professor, Departments of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology and Chemistry, and the College; and Director, Institute for Biophysical Dynamics.

Carlos Bustamente is a pioneer of one of the most exciting fields of modern science: namely, “single molecule” studies of nucleic acids and proteins. This revolutionary approach makes use of novel physical methods to perform mechanical measurements on individual biological macromolecules.

Bustamente has applied the single molecule approach to the investigation of systems as diverse as the action of enzymes that bind DNA (e.g., polymerases

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and topoisomerases), the forces underlying the folding of RNA molecules, the energy-driven and conformational movements of cytoskeletal motor proteins, and the elasticity of cytoskeletal elements. In the process, Bustamante has provided fundamental insights into the chemical and physical principles underlying many important biological phenomena. His contributions are extensive, rigorous, and breathtakingly elegant.

Citation: Carlos Bustamante is a scholar of unusual breadth. He is a remarkable teacher and lecturer who captivates his audiences with his brilliant expositions, in understandable language, of the complex studies and methodologies in which he is engaged. As a chemist, using innovative physics to do fundamental new biology, Bustamante’s work perfectly exemplifies the power of interdisciplinary research at the interface of the physical and biological sciences.

Lila R. Gleitman
Professor, Departments of Psychology and Linguistics, University of Pennsylvania

The candidate was presented by Susan Golden-Meadow, the Irving B. Harris Professor, Departments of Psychology and Comparative Human Development, and the College.

Lila Gleitman is an intellectual leader in not just one field but two—psychology and linguistics. Her research, remarkable for its originality and clarity, has literally set the agenda for the entire field of language-learning. As a student of the renowned linguist Zellig Harris, Gleitman became acutely aware of the magnitude of the problem facing the language-learning child—children must learn an intricate system of linguistic rules just by listening to whatever sentences people utter. Her fellow student, Noam Chomsky, solved the problem by documenting the principles underlying the linguistic systems that children have to learn and by assuming those principles are innate.

Gleitman took a different approach. She chose to observe carefully the language-learning process itself. While not denying that children are innately predisposed to learn language—indeed, she is the most significant and influential proponent of this position—Gleitman bases her claims on innovative empirical investigations of how the endowments children bring to language-learning interact with the input they receive to create language. She is one of those rare people who alter the course of intellectual inquiry—and clearly for the better.

Citation: For her ground-breaking program of research that has come to define the field of language-learning, through theoretically motivated and empirically elegant investigations, Lila Gleitman has documented how the inherent endowments children bring to language-learning interact with the input they receive to create language. The interface between language and psychology would look very different were it not for Lila Gleitman.