



Investiture Ceremony  
Friday, September 21, 2012

## Doing What Matters

*Address by President Virginia Schaefer Horvath*

Although this may be unconventional, I would like to dedicate my remarks today to two women who are not here except in spirit and in the hearts and minds of those of us who love them: my mother, Mary Joyce Cheney Schaefer, and my godmother, Kathleen Cheney Anderson. These strong, smart, devoted women always encouraged me—along with reminders to stand up straight, look into people’s eyes, and speak my mind—to do my best and do what I love. I would not be here without them.

As I do first thing each morning, I begin this address with gratitude. To do so adequately would certainly tax your patience, as there are so many I thank for the privilege I have in standing at this podium today. Thank you, Chancellor Zimpher, SUNY Trustees, and members of the College Council for your confidence in appointing me and for your support as I begin in this role. I value your advocacy for SUNY with the Governor and the citizens of New York, and I look forward to working with you.

Thank you, delegates, for traveling to be here today and to connect the work of your institutions to Fredonia; having members of my ACE Fellows class, Millennium Leadership Institute class, and colleagues from SUNY and Western New York campuses here is wonderful. Thank you, faculty and staff of SUNY Fredonia, for the work you do that inspires me every day and for your presence this afternoon. Thank you, students and alumni, who represent the best of what Fredonia is and can do and who have been enthusiastic in your welcome to me. Thank you to some of my mentors who have traveled to be here: Carol Cartwright, Gordon Keller, Len Faulk, Indira Parikh, and especially, Dennis Hefner. Thank you to the Cabinet—Karen Porpiglia, Kevin Kearns, David Herman, and David Tiffany; I cannot imagine a better team to work with during this time of transition and beyond. Thank you to all members of the Inauguration Committee, especially Jefferson Westwood and Denise Szalkowski, for the dedication and good heart you put into planning and carrying out every detail of this week. Thank you community and friends of mine and of this campus: your presence today is a sign of your encouragement and support.

I have many family members here, and I’d like to ask them all to stand. If I say all these names, we’ll be here forever, so I want to say to each of you that I’m grateful for the love and

support you have given me always and for your traveling to be part of this day, which is, incidentally, my big brother Brian's birthday. I am especially blessed to have here today my daughters, Emily and Caitlin, and to be joined by my mother- and father-in-law, Eugene and Nancy Horvath, and my father, Paul Schaefer—whose lives have inspired my husband Brooke and me and given us role models for so many aspects of our lives. And Brooke, you are the smartest, funniest best friend and sweetheart I could have, and I thank you for your love and patience today and in the role ahead. (And this is my *short* version of all the thanks due!)

In this time when universities—public and private—face tremendous financial, political, intellectual, technological, and other complex challenges, many people have been asking me, “Why on earth would you want to be a college president?” It's a question I've asked myself many times over the past decade, as I resisted leaving a full-time faculty role to become an administrator, as I assumed leadership positions in Academic Affairs, and as I reflected on becoming a candidate at SUNY Fredonia. Those of you who had the chance to join any of this week's campus activities will especially understand my answer: I am honored and thrilled to be Fredonia's 13<sup>th</sup> President because this is such a good place, not just with provocative speakers and music and performances but many informal moments that make a difference. I'm committed to working with the talented faculty and staff here to do what matters—what Fredonia has done well since 1826.

In the beautiful lyrics by Michael Dennis Browne in “The Road Home,” which we've just heard, is the phrase, “There is no such beauty / As where you belong.” The piece made me think of Fredonia as a place where I and faculty and staff feel we belong, and where we all reach out to welcome students to be at home here and grow from there.

Although it seems that I'm speaking in platitudes, I offer these perspectives of Fredonia based not on generalities or aspirations but my own eye for detail, my careful listening of the voices and sounds around me. Some of you know of my interest in photography, perhaps a fortunate inheritance from my paternal grandfather. I like to look closely at things to understand them, the big picture, and my place, inspired by a similar sense of what matters that poet Mary Oliver articulates so deftly in her poem, “Messenger”:

My work is loving the world.  
Here the sunflowers, there the hummingbird —  
equal seekers of sweetness.  
Here the quickening yeast; there the blue plums.  
Here the clam deep in the speckled sand.

Are my boots old? Is my coat torn?  
Am I no longer young, and still not half-perfect? Let me

keep my mind on what matters,  
which is my work,

which is mostly standing still and learning to be  
astonished.

The phoebe, the delphinium.

The sheep in the pasture, and the pasture.

Which is mostly rejoicing, since all ingredients are here,

which is gratitude, to be given a mind and a heart  
and these body-clothes,

a mouth with which to give shouts of joy

to the moth and the wren, to the sleepy dug-up clam,

telling them all, over and over, how it is

that we live forever.

Of course this is far more pastoral than the scenes across campus here. But these are the kinds of things that I saw this week—beyond the major events that you've read about in the program and seen posted on You Tube. I had breakfast with first-year students who were open about how hard it's been to be away from home and how they are getting used to their professors. I came across two faculty—one in psychology, one in philosophy—who were pitched in an energetic conversation over coffee and discovered that they were sharing ideas about assessing student learning. This really happened! I saw students in my own class move from complaining and frustration about a difficult text to a point of understanding and then applying the theorist's ideas. I saw alums reposting our flash mob video in remarkable numbers, saying with pride, "That's my school!" I saw caring emails that faculty and staff sent to a colleague who has just completed radiation therapy for breast cancer. I heard at least four languages as I walked across campus. I heard a senior tell a sophomore that she doesn't have to dress up for hours to go downtown, saw students working together amid a swirl of papers and electronics in Reed Library, overheard a lot of classes and interactions in the dining halls. I saw students with artsy clothes and piercings, students in ties, students in athletic gear—sitting at the same table in Cranston Marché. I heard students asking intelligent questions of internationally known speakers. I saw a remarkable number of people working together not only to dance at University Commons or accommodate guests and delegates or arrange last night's amazing international dinner, but to respond with medical teams when a student became ill during class and to check last-minute details at more than 25 locations for tomorrow's Day of Service. When you read about our successful graduation rates and wonder how that kind of success happens, these are "what matters," as Oliver has said. And when I stand still and see what is around me, I am astonished, grateful, even rejoicing, to see that "all ingredients are here" and to be doing the work of loving this particular world and the way it becomes a place of belonging and growth for students.

Fredonia's history is a solid foundation for many of its current strengths. The Fredonia Academy was founded in 1826 by members of this community who saw a need for education of teachers and invested their resources to make this happen. For 186 years, Fredonia has had strong relationships with the Village of Fredonia and City of Dunkirk, with Chautauqua County, and with Western New York. Our connections to the communities we serve remains a vital part of who we are. The Fredonia Technology Incubator in Dunkirk has in three short years created a model of innovation and entrepreneurship, with more than 60 jobs created by companies in residence, with one of the first graduating companies about to move up Central Avenue and set roots in downtown Dunkirk as they prepare for growth. Fredonia students do field experience and clinical practice throughout Western New York, and last year 337 student teachers were placed in 58 districts throughout the state. Through the Office of Volunteer and Community Services, Fredonia students last year provided more than 14,000 volunteer hours to over 30 agencies. Through these activities and the service-learning components of their courses, they learn from community partners and expand their understanding of the content of their courses. But they also contribute in meaningful ways: for example, earlier this year accounting students in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program processed 708 electronic and paper returns—resulting in more than \$1.5 million in federal and state refunds for community members.

From the start, our institution has centered on learning—not only preparing teachers, as it has always done well, but also being attentive to the ways that students learn best and encouraging personal growth, both in and out of the classroom. The Leadership Development program, for example, was one of the first of its kind to engage students in a combination of experiential education, skills-based training, lecture, and internship opportunities. This remains an important part of what we offer as a residential campus with professionals and faculty who keep students at the center of what we do.

During Fredonia's years as a Normal School, specialties in music and other arts fields emerged, leading to the creative spirit and originality that still pervades the curriculum and co-curriculum. You can't walk across this campus without hearing music through the open windows of Mason Hall, without seeing sculpture, without hearing broadcasts from the student-run radio station, without seeing people carrying instruments and portfolios. It's not unusual to see students rehearsing music and stage combat and theatrical scripts in all kinds of places or participating in poetry slams in the Williams Center. And similar creativity is at work in the Fishbowl of the Mathematical Sciences Department or the process-oriented guided instruction in Chemistry or innovative experiential programs like the London Literary Study trip. People here are also creative when they sit down together and figure out how to solve a personnel issue, a budget challenge, or an upgrade to an information technology system.

In its years as a State Teachers College, Fredonia's liberal arts and sciences programs flourished, adding master's degrees and bachelor's degrees in liberal arts fields that had been reserved for elite colleges. When I discuss the classic idea of the seven liberal arts with new students, they quickly understand that "liberal" education is not a reflection of politics but an emphasis on the kind of learning that makes people free—able to participate in civil society, advance in leadership roles, and move from one field to another. Even in summer orientation discussions, first-year students can explain why we still need to cultivate the parts of our brains that think analytically, that give us aesthetic appreciation, that enable us to write and speak logically and articulately, that help us understand the world scientifically, and that wrestle with spiritual identity and moral reasoning. Beyond the specialized training of their majors, these students understand why a liberal arts foundation is the essential learning they will need for any career and why having a bachelor's degree is important not just for an elite few but for all who hope to succeed in their work and make a difference in a knowledge-based democracy. The need for this learning is still strong, as according to the most recent census, only 32.4% of New Yorkers earn the baccalaureate degree.<sup>1</sup> I do see an important part of our shared work in the years ahead to ensure that public liberal arts universities, and especially Fredonia, are able to continue to build on this rich academic tradition and to demonstrate not only the relevance of this degree but the reasons that the state and nation should continue to invest in developing liberally educated leaders.

When I was an undergraduate, I had little sense of how learning ethics or organic chemistry or the Calculus or French would have any impact on my life, but I've come to realize that every day I rely on specific knowledge I've acquired and certain habits of mind that each discipline cultivates. When students ask me, "How will I possibly use this?" I turn the question on them—and they usually have some good guesses. But the point of a liberal arts education, I remind them, is to learn broadly—all you can—because you may find yourself, as I once did, in a Japanese hospital with a nine-year old daughter in pain. I struggled with the medical terms the doctor was saying in Japanese, but I was relieved when I heard him say, "*otitis media*," [middle-ear inflammation] and recalled the Latin that I thought I'd never use in real life. This learning matters, in ways you cannot predict. Although we are used to such immediate results these days—I admit that I, too, now expect to find whatever I want uploaded right away in a single click—learning for its own sake, testing and practicing what you learn, and challenging yourself will make you smarter and better able to address the complex problems of the future. This is the work that has mattered, historically, at Fredonia, and the work that all of us must continue to do.

Previous presidents at Fredonia have led efforts to grow physical facilities and programs, leaving a legacy of a unique campus environment, academic programs, and campus life. I'd like to mention a few of these accomplishments that are reflected symbolically on the chain of office I now wear. From a single building on the commons in Fredonia where the 1891 Fredonia Opera

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<sup>1</sup> Based on 2009 U.S. Census data: <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0233.pdf>

House now stands, the institution grew to include Old Main, a structure now at the corner of Central and Temple. John Armstrong added art and music programs, as well as extracurricular groups in the 1870s, and under the leadership of Francis Palmer the student newspaper, the *Normal Leader*, was established in 1899; it remains one of the few completely student-run newspapers in the country. Myron Dana turned attention to teacher preparation as a specialty in 1905, and summer classes and further cocurricular enrichments appeared under the watch of Howard Burdge, who also instituted sabbaticals and encouraged faculty research. Hermann Cooper's organization of the first faculty council in the early 1930s established a tradition of shared governance that continues today with the University Senate and strong Fredonia faculty representation on the state-wide Faculty Senate. President Cooper also dreamed of western expansion—west of Central Avenue that is—and arranged for purchase of 58 acres of land that he envisioned as a traditional academic commons.

Leslie Gregory was president when the first buildings were constructed on the new site and when the State University of New York, which included Fredonia State Teachers College, was created in 1948. In the 1950s, Harry Porter's presidency saw the addition of study abroad programs, the honors program, a Division of Humanities, and selective admissions. The current campus you see was the vision of Oscar Lanford, who from 1961-71 greatly expanded the size of the campus and the number of buildings through a master plan from I.M. Pei and Partners and established the Fredonia College Foundation. Dallas Beal led the campus through completion of that master plan and creation of new academic programs. Under Donald MacPhee's leadership, educational partnerships grew, as did the technology infrastructure. Dennis Hefner was an advocate for the construction of the natatorium, University Commons, Rosch Recital Hall, Technology Incubator, and Campus and Community Children's Center, but he also secured the funding for the Science Center you see rising on one corner of our campus and, soon, the addition to the Rockefeller Arts Center at the other corner of the academic core. As this chain of office reveals, the history of this institution is a legacy of strength that provides solid ground for the future.

Now we must think about what occurs in those buildings and under the canopy of honey locust trees that were planted so long ago. This is the work that will matter because that is what will define and distinguish Fredonia in the years ahead. Now a selective, residential, public liberal arts university, Fredonia each fall becomes a new home for talented students who bring to this campus not only strong high school academic records but leadership experience, strong abilities in the arts and athletics, and personal characteristics that can lead to success. When I first interviewed here in 2005, I noticed how the eyes of faculty and staff members lit up when I asked about their students. Through teaching courses here and through my interactions with students over the years, I have come to share their enthusiasm. Students here are smart, but also curious, altruistic, creative, ambitious, and teachable. This is a hard characteristic to quantify or define, but they are also remarkably nice. They generally get along well, respect property, and

help out. These are qualities that may be dismissed as trivial or unrelated to the real work of a modern university, but at Fredonia, we've come to realize that such qualities are at the heart of what matters.

Whenever I begin to wax romantic about higher education, I hear the words of Abigail Adams, "We have too many high-sounding words, and too few actions that correspond to them." So before I close, I'd like to tell you some of the specific ways that doing what matters will be our work in the months and years ahead.

Last year, a committee led by Dr. Jeanette McVicker and Dr. Richard Reddy engaged all of us in defining the overall goals that we have for Fredonia students. By the time they graduate, we concluded, all Fredonia students demonstrate that they are *skilled, connected, creative, and responsible*. Everything we do in the classroom, studio, lab, residence hall, and across campus is centered on helping students achieve these goals and prepare for work, citizenship, and fulfilling lives. A cross-campus team is beginning a process of defining the roles each program has in assisting students.

Last year we also finalized a strategic plan—the *Power of Fredonia*—that outlines the ways we will build on our historic foundations even as we approach our mission in new ways. Our process, like much of the work we do here, was highly collaborative, with 71 different reports coming to the planning committee. Making sure that our work aligns well with the six big ideas of the *Power of SUNY* plan, we kept Fredonia's strong sense of community at the center and identified four directions that build on our strengths. This is the blueprint that will guide my work and the campus work in the next few years. I will be investing much of my attention to these four goals in the next few years, and I will also be investing a portion of my own salary. Working with the Fredonia College Foundation, I have established four funds, one to support the work of each of the goals of the *Power of Fredonia* plan. Each is named for a Fredonia student whose work and legacy might inspire us.

First, Fredonia as a Community of Learning: *SUNY Fredonia will be known as a community of learning, with innovative teaching practices and distinctive, diverse learning opportunities for all of its stakeholders*. Those who attended the Symposium yesterday had the chance to hear about innovative practices that build connection among students, whether this is done through experiential learning aboard an historic ship, living-learning communities, innovative use of technology, or service-learning that brings benefits to Fredonia students and the community members they serve. Accomplishing this goal on the community of learning on an even broader scale will include expanding research opportunities for faculty, integrating advanced learning technologies more fully, revising general education in light of the baccalaureate goals, supporting the work of the Professional Development Center, and approaching diversity as an integral part of learning opportunities.

The Cabinet has agreed to allocate resources in two ways to advance the community of learning. To ensure that along with the opening of the science center, we are attending to the programs that will go into this state-of-the-art building, we will be offering 20 STEM Honors Awards next year—\$5,000 renewable scholarships for students in science and mathematics. We will also be investing in course schedule modeling software that uses analytics and student need to build the course schedule and that increases our ability to include paired courses in a revised general education curriculum.

In addition, the Calista Lewis Steele Fund will support these efforts to strengthen Fredonia as a community of learning. Calista Lewis Steele was an 1827 Fredonia Academy graduate who was not content with the limited roles offered to her in the early nineteenth century: when she left Fredonia, she went on to become the principal of Black Rock Female Seminary in Buffalo, a position she held for ten years, sharing her interest in learning with many others, including her five daughters. Believing that education was paramount, she also sent two of her daughters to Fredonia and became an inspiration for women.

Second, Fredonia as an Engaged Community: *SUNY Fredonia will be known as a respectful, supportive community, which stimulates and supports social, cultural, artistic, intellectual, and economic growth through multiple and diverse campus and community collaborations.* The strategic planning committee understood *engagement* on multiple levels, so the specific actions include not only striving for Carnegie classification as an engaged campus but also strengthening a healthy workplace and productive relationships on campus and providing further support for the student engagement activities that we know have high impact: the internships, student research, performances, service-learning, and field-based courses that help students broaden and connect their learning to the community and the world. We will also continue to strengthen connections between the intellectual resources of the university and the clients and programs of the Technology Incubator so that there is even more visible and direct participation in the economic development of the region.

Tomorrow's Day of Service will have more than 400 students, faculty, and staff members at over 25 sites across the region, sporting Fredonia blue shirts and assisting in a range of community service projects. The new Handbook on Appointment, Reappointment, and Promotion (HARP) reflects engagement as valued faculty work, and the vision statement for the College of Visual and Performing Arts—which will be founded next summer—also reflects community collaboration as an important way of engaging campus and citizens with the arts. Required internships for all students in the School of Business ensure their ability to apply classroom learning in a variety of business settings, and internships and co-ops continue to grow in many other fields of study. The Cabinet has allocated funds to support this work and will be exploring structures that encourage collaboration across divisions.



The Sarah Jane Lippincott Fund will also support Fredonia as an Engaged Community. Sarah Jane Lippincott, who attended the Fredonia Academy in the 1830s, was known as “Grace Greenwood,” one of the nineteenth-century “scribbling women,” who served as a special correspondent in Washington and Europe for leading New York, Chicago, and California newspapers. Losing her job at *Godey's Lady's Book* in 1849 for writing an anti-slavery article, she went on to write her Washington Letters for *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

Another important part of our strategic plan focuses on Fredonia as a Sustainable Community: *SUNY Fredonia will be known as a sustainable community, engaging in practices that ensure our own vitality as an institution, integrating sustainability principles into all aspects of campus life, and acting as a model for sustainability initiatives in the communities we serve.* Aspects of this commitment include not only environmental stewardship education and practices across campus but sustaining ourselves as an institution and assisting students in making college affordable. As one of five SUNY campuses that are piloting the SmartTrack program, Fredonia will be part of this comprehensive approach to providing transparency about college costs, responsible borrowing, and financial literacy. We also continue to explore ways that we can share services with other SUNY campuses and look for efficiencies in our operations. We already work closely with several institutions in Western New York on such initiatives, including our collaboration with Alfred State on printing.

The Olga Cielnicky Leone Fund will support our ongoing efforts as a Sustainable Community. A member of the graduating class of 1947, Olga Cielnicky Leone worked with her classmates during the war years to share their rations for butter, meat, and milk. They lived on one dollar a day. She was also a member of the “grape savers,” Fredonia students who ensured the sustainability of local agriculture by assisting area farmers bring in the grape harvest when workers were scarce.

As we celebrated last night at the international dinner, another important direction is Fredonia as a Global Community: *SUNY Fredonia will be known as a global community, with an even more internationalized curriculum and stronger engagement with regional, national, and global communities.* The Power of Fredonia plan articulates this need clearly: “As members of the global society, we need to understand and respect the economic, social, and biological interdependence of global life. Such awareness recognizes individual difference as a collective strength and encourages the preservation of cultural histories and heritages. All of us in the SUNY Fredonia community need to have more opportunities to learn about what is taking place in the world and to develop a fuller understanding of perspectives, life experiences, history, and cultures of others.” Accomplishing this goal will mean increasing opportunities for study abroad, assisting students in financing such experiences, supporting faculty's own international

experiences, welcoming more international students to Fredonia, enhancing language offerings that promote international communication, and doing all we can to ensure that the curriculum includes a global perspective. One cannot be an effective citizen these days—in any career—without an understanding of the cultures of the world. We owe it to the next generation of Fredonia students to ensure that they have these opportunities to learn.

Funds contributed by donors at the international dinner will become a part of the Dianne Kricheldorf Fund. A member of the graduating class of 1954, Dianne Kricheldorf worked as a government teacher in Morocco, North Africa, and West Germany and then brought her global perspectives to years of teaching in Western New York. It is fitting to recognize her international work by naming this fund in her honor, and we are fortunate to have her join us today. Ms. Kricheldorf, will you please stand?

Throughout this week, the creative and dedicated Inauguration Committee has organized events that celebrate these four directions of the *Power of Fredonia*. We heard internationally acclaimed artist Christo tell the story of finding what he wanted to do as an artist and working hard to fund his major installations and secure permissions in complex political arenas. Musical performances by the Western New York Chamber Orchestra and Fredonia faculty offered opportunities—such as those you've heard today—to value the transcending power of the arts. The dance on University Commons showed what can be accomplished when people who don't even know one another well—or know how to dance!—work hard and have fun. We heard distinguished speaker Jean Kilbourne advocate for health, justice, and media literacy as she encouraged a full house of students and others to read cultural texts critically and to resist pressure to engage in unhealthy habits and self-criticism. The international dinner brought together community members, faculty, staff, students, international partners, and friends of Fredonia in a moment of celebrating what we have done and imagining the journey we'll continue to take. And tomorrow's Day of Service will be an active way to demonstrate our commitments to sustainability, public intellectual work, and community partnerships. It's been quite a week!

Last August, when Dennis Hefner announced his retirement at the all-campus meeting, there was a collective gasp from the audience, followed by months of anxiety and wondering what would happen next and whether the important work he did here would be lost. But we have a great plan in the *Power of Fredonia*. We have people committed to implementing the work that is ahead. And in selecting me as the next President of SUNY Fredonia, Chancellor Zimpher has placed the chain of office on the shoulders of someone who loves this place, who is committed to serving this generation of students, and who promises to focus on what matters. I close with just two words: Let's go!