Executive Summary
The highlight of Dr. McNairy’s convocation address was the announcement of a transformation initiative to prepare the University for 21st-century success. The drivers of current economic realities, the way our students acquire knowledge, competition, accountability and a changing America, are the compelling and interrelated forces that affect our ability as a public university to strengthen student learning and to help students find the path to productive citizenship. She introduced the framework Millersville University will employ to address transformation – the establishment of three key initiatives: student success, advocacy and civic engagement.

It was Friday evening, March 21, 1980. I am almost embarrassed to admit it, but I, like millions of Americans, was tuned into CBS to watch the final episode of the second season of Dallas. The series chronicled the saga of the Ewings, a very wealthy Texas oil family, rife with weekly conflict. Center stage was the wily eldest son, JR, who, on that Friday evening as the clock moved ever closer to 10:00 p.m., was about to be shot. Bang! Bang! Fade to black. Followed by three unforgettable words: To Be Continued. Nooooooohhhhhhh! I shouted as the credits rolled and the theme song swelled. This is not fair. I would have to wait until n-e-x-t fall to find out if JR lives or dies… and, equally important, to learn the answer to the all consuming question: “Who shot JR?” Now, I recognize that many of you were quite young when this television series was in its heyday. The equivalent today might be the Harry Potter series, where millions of readers were figuratively poised on the edge of their seats until the next volume or movie was released.

The cliffhanger -- credited by some as devised by Victorian novelist Thomas Hardy in the late 1800s, dramatized in the popular silent film of 1914 The Perils of Pauline -- the cliffhanger was immortalized in western radio dramas where multiple episodes ended with the hero literally dangling for his life from the edge of a high cliff. The cliffhanger is one of two primary rhetorical devices for concluding a story.

While causing a certain amount of angst and disappointment, the three-word option, TO BE CONTINUED, is often more preferable to the alternative, two-word, option: THE END. The end. Kaput. Fini. Even when wrapped with the six-word promise, “And they lived happily ever after,” there is a tinge of sadness to realize a story has reached its end.
Alternatively, *TO BE CONTINUED* suggests that there is more to the story. For better or worse, more is yet to come. *TO BE CONTINUED* heightens our curiosity and our creativity as we ponder possible next realities, and it gives us a reason to stay engaged.

I believe we are fortunate to be partnered in a *TO BE CONTINUED* vocation here at Millersville. *Our* story is yet unfolding. As we left the campus last spring, we had something of our own cliffhanger going -- a grotesquely looming budget challenge that left us all hanging by our nails on the very edge of impending disaster. Thankfully, total disaster was averted when the legislature and the governor agreed to an 18% cut in our State allocation instead of the 50% cut initially proposed.

Originally, I intended to recap the disheartening fiscal realities we have faced for the last several years, but I know you are only too well acquainted with them, and we have far more important issues to consider this afternoon. Suffice it to say that, just as Pauline found herself tied to the rail tracks as a train came rushing ’round the bend, external forces had tied our hands and placed in jeopardy our ability to keep the promise to our students of an education that is second to none. In short, as *TO BE CONTINUED* flashed last spring, we faced an erosion of Millersville University’s quality and brand.

Yet, as we begin this new academic year in the face of uncertainties, I am so proud of the agility shown by the University community in developing responsible and creative possibilities for moving forward. While others dangling from the high cliff during these challenging times might simply let go and allow the stress and fatigue of the situation to cause their fall, our spirit of engagement with others and keen eye for creative solutions and entrepreneurial opportunities allow us to be proactive in providing our students a second-to-none educational experience.

Let me highlight several examples of how members of this community have been creative in transitioning challenges into amazing opportunities.

1. We have long sought a home within Lancaster City that would connect us to the city and enable its residents to take advantage of an affordable, high-quality education. When 42 North Prince Street became available, faculty from Art, Theatre and Music toured the facility and provided input into its feasibility for their programs, considering how the space would complement the renovation of the on-campus Visual and Performing Arts Center. A plan to seek capital dollars from the State to underwrite the purchase of the facility was realized. Thus, Millersville University Lancaster became a reality where educational, cultural and artistic opportunities abound. In a few days, there will be an announcement of a naming opportunity at this facility -- a part of the University story that is *TO BE CONTINUED*. (On September 12, 2011, I announced that this facility would be named The Ware Center at Millersville University Lancaster.)
2. About a year before the Blackboard course management system contract was to expire, the State System of Higher Education office procured a new contract with Desire to Learn – D2L. We had fewer than six months to devise plans and provide training to migrate the course content of several hundred courses and organizations from Blackboard to D2L. Committed faculty and gifted staff from Information Technology seized the opportunity and reached beyond their traditional divisional boundaries to successfully migrate from Blackboard to D2L in such a timely and efficient manner that students and faculty were spared many of the hardships such transitions often bring.

3. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) mandated that all elementary, early childhood, secondary and special education programs be revised to meet new certification requirements through the Chapter 49-2 legislation. Fulfilling this mandate required substantive curricular changes to well-established and successful programs. Failure to address the mandate would have resulted in Millersville students being denied teacher certification. Recognizing the extreme time limitations needed for the curricular revisions, the Faculty Senate leadership and body embraced an expedited curricular submission and review process. This cooperative venture resulted in Millersville attaining full approval from PDE for our new certification program proposals in Pre K-4, Middle Level, and Dual Special Education.

4. The need to equip today’s workforce and the imperative for new multidisciplinary programs to deal with complex issues prompted the development of the MS in Integrated Scientific Applications. The goal of this program is to participate in building national capacity in education and training in science, mathematics, technology and engineering (STEM) areas. It serves as the canopy for building specializations in a number of areas, including Environmental Systems Management, Geoinformatics, Weather Intelligence and Risk Management, Climate Science Applications and others based on evolving workforce needs.

5. A Communication and Theatre faculty member viewed the challenge to attract and retain nontraditional students who seek college degrees and/or enroll in programs due to career changes or enhanced job demand as an opportunity to pilot a new approach for teaching public speaking. Open Source Learning Support for Public Speaking is an innovative program that integrates online and face-to-face pedagogies. This approach provides learning opportunities geared to the transient nature of the nontraditional student and is responsive to the rapid demand for alternative educational delivery methods. This program is in the development stage -- a part of the University story that is TO BE CONTINUED.

6. The societal challenge to have greater numbers of students interested in teaching mathematics to those in basic education was an opportunity for the Schools of Science and Mathematics and Education to collaborate in obtaining a grant from the
National Science Foundation (NSF). It is with great pride that I share with you that we were notified recently that NSF has awarded a $1.2 million grant to Millersville University. Over the next five years, this grant will fund full two-year and one-year merit scholarships to 24 undergraduate and six graduate students. The grant also offers full tuition and room and board to selected students for the Philadelphia Urban Seminar. Those receiving the scholarships must also agree to teach in high-need school districts, and there are funds allowing for faculty/student research and evaluation of the program.

Millersville faculty and administrators were intentional in all six of these examples. Our collective, passionate concern for our students and determined optimism in the face of considerable doubt have been, and continue to be, the Millersville spirit.

But the time to congratulate ourselves must be brief for there are still challenges to be confronted. And I must warn you that the pain we faced in converting to D2L and meeting new certification requirements, pales in comparison to the pain of reconciling our current economic reality with our commitment to delivering a high-quality, affordable education. More than ever before, the challenge for us to justify the value of a college education, when recent graduates are struggling to find entry-level positions, will require even more creativity than purchasing 42 North Prince Street. And the competition for the brightest faculty, most competent staff, diligent students and diminishing resources will tax our flexibility and innovative spirit more than the creation of new degree programs.

The transformative power of cooperation, creativity, flexibility and innovation carried us through earlier challenges and will be an integral part of the TO BE CONTINUED Millersville story. I submit to you that Millersville University is poised on the brink of transformation. In the past, this institution never flinched when the need to transform itself arose, and we don’t intend to start now. As your President, I pledge my energies and those of my Cabinet members to work with you in transforming this University.

What does transformation mean? “Transformation at Millersville University is an understanding of our past while we undertake a thorough or dramatic change—a metamorphosis—of this University at the start of the 21st century.” Let me repeat that. “Transformation at Millersville University is an understanding of our past while we undertake a thorough or dramatic change—a metamorphosis—of this University at the start of the 21st century.”

Why is transformation imperative? What are the drivers that bring us to this point? Economic realities, the way our students acquire knowledge, competition, accountability and a changing America are the compelling and interrelated forces that affect our ability as a public university to strengthen student learning and to help students find the path to
productive citizenship. Next week I will share with you, and post on our website, the Case for Change to help both internal and external constituents understand the need for transformation.

But, today, let me give you a framework for our transformational agenda.

Allow your mind to envision that we are the institution of choice for the students we wish to attract because we are known as an institution that is focused on and committed to STUDENT SUCCESS.

Now imagine that we have more CONTROL over our fiscal and political destiny including the capacity, flexibility and agility to meet the learning and service needs of our students.

Tap into your creativity to picture that we are an institution where our faculty and professional staff are focused on strengthening our UNIQUE educational experience, based in the liberal arts and sciences, with an emphasis on CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY, where we help our students become productive citizens whose passion to achieve—and passion to make a difference—drive our society and our economy.

Now look around this room and see… see the people who are going to make this transformation a reality!

The University administration is determined to lead this transformation and, to that end, I share with you key actions to which we have committed ourselves for 2011-12.

1) We will address student success by examining issues of how to reduce time to graduation and other, more flexible delivery means, without sacrificing quality. We will create a cross-divisional think tank comprised of representatives of all key stakeholders to operationally and visually define “student success.”

   We must transform curriculum and pedagogy to support student success in a dynamic, multicultural, interdisciplinary and technology-infused environment. I charge each faculty member, in collaboration with the Provost and the Deans, to re-imagine both pedagogy and curriculum that is agile, responsive and relevant to today’s students and the world they will serve.

   Mr. Provost and Madame Vice President for Student Affairs, I hereby charge you with co-leading the Student Success Initiative in cooperation with our Chief Diversity Officer.
2) We will greatly increase our advocacy action agenda to control and enhance our economic destiny. Mr. Executive Deputy and Mr. Vice President for University Advancement, I hereby charge you with co-leading the Advocacy Agenda.

3) We will continue to identify and implement initiatives that result in improved services for our students. These initiatives might be divisional or cross-divisional, have the potential to result in greater cost savings but, at a minimum, will result in improved efficiencies and effectiveness. Mr. Vice President for Finance & Administration and Mr. Vice President for Information Resources, I hereby charge you with co-leading the Structure & Service Initiative.

Lest you think that the actions to which the University administration is pledging itself are the only transformative actions on campus, let me share with you that, only last week, people with passion spontaneously formed several groups and have committed to work with the University community on the following action items:

- Expanding the living-learning community for nontraditional and graduate students.
- Reframing advisement with the goal of improving student retention.
- Promoting an ongoing transformation dialogue on campus where students, faculty, and staff gather for conversations on transformation, and transformation successes.
- Piloting a “middle college” program to staff summer programs in Philadelphia public schools, helping students navigate the high-level courses in such areas as calculus and honors English.
- Creating a culture of transformation by establishing an environment where everyone is empowered to make substantive contributions and where we learn from mistakes.

And be assured, mistakes will be made! But collectively we have the intellect, collectively we have the energy, collectively we have the spirit, and collectively we have the passion to use our mistakes as opportunities for exploration.

I am keenly aware of the extra load that each of you is carrying: increased class sizes and additional work assignments across the University. But, hopefully, you heard something in this litany of actions that resonates with your own passion. Or maybe this list sparked ideas of other actions that need to be taken to transform this august institution. I ask you to tap into your own creativity. You might have noticed pieces of paper on your chairs when you arrived. At the top of these pages is the open-ended statement:
I can imagine a transformed University. I suggest the following action item to help us get there…

In a moment I will give you time to write down an action item that will help transform the University through our framework of student success, control and civic responsibility. Take a few minutes now to be bold, to be creative and to use your imagination. Share your ideas, but your ideas must reflect three key concepts:

First, your actions must fit the transformation definition, address the drivers that force our transformation, and fit into the framework of student success, control and civic responsibility.

Second, we must be able to accomplish these actions in the next one-three years.

Third, we must be able to track the progress on the actions.

You may begin.

I can see your creative juices flowing, and your energy radiates in this room like a thousand points of light. When you exit, you will be able to place your suggestions on special sticky walls outside of this room as you head to the Garden Supper. I hope that you will continue to discuss our transformation at the supper, where computers and easels have been set up in the lobby outside the recreation center for you to continue to share your action items and thoughts.

This is a dynamic process and an ongoing dialogue. More opportunities to share will be offered throughout the year. You’re probably wondering, “What will become of my transformation action suggestions?” They are part of Millersville’s TO BE CONTINUED! These suggestions will be compiled and will be used as the foundation for a Transformation Action Fair for faculty, staff and students. This fair will be similar to a job, fair but, in this case, people with a passion for transformative action will be recruiting others with the same passion.

Now let me ask you…

Can you envision yourself at an institution that is the choice for the students we wish to attract because we are known as an institution that is focused on and committed to student success?

Can you imagine that we have more control over our fiscal and political agenda including the capacity, flexibility and agility to meet the learning and service needs of our students?
Can you picture Millersville as an institution that offers a unique educational experience with an emphasis on civic responsibility, where we help our students become productive citizens whose passion to achieve—and passion to make a difference—drive our society and our economy?

The Millersville saga is still unfolding and there is so much more to the story! Will you join me in pledging your vision, your energy, your creativity and your passion in transforming Millersville University?

TO BE CONTINUED...