

MERRIMACK CONVOCATION 9/10/08

Welcome to the Merrimack fall convocation

Let me offer a reflection on convocation.

Often times I puzzled about what a College was, is and will be. Show me the College! How can I see it, feel it, sense it, experience it so that I can know it and begin to understand it.

Yes, there is a charter issued by the State to legally run a College at Merrimack. But a document gathering dust in an archive in the state house in Boston is no more a College than a marriage license is a marriage. Surely, you need a charter to legally establish and run a College, but that's not all there is.

At times – too often in fact - I would stay late at night and have a chance to walk around campus – wherever I was – at Fordham, Manhattanville, Salem, Xavier, Shimer, and Merrimack. I found all the buildings were eerily silent as they sat there bathed in soft light – empty. I wasn't seeing the College. Surely a College is not its buildings and grounds, no more than a house is a home. Yes, you need buildings and grounds to keep out of the weather, but that's not all there is.

I invite you to reflect on what we are doing here and now. This is a convocation. As that very word signifies, this is a “calling together” of members of Merrimack -the faculty, staff, and students – to form a com-union that becomes the community of those who actively engage in teaching, scholarship and learning.

Colleges and Universities were first conceived at a time when people took seriously the opening words of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* - "Man by nature is the desire to know." And Cicero's proposition in his work *Ex Officiis*, "Only man is capable of pursuing knowledge and truth." And of course, as St. Augustine simply put it in his sermon 169, "Keep adding, keep walking, keep advancing."

From the root meaning of the word College, *cum-lego*, a College is a community of people for the purposes of reading and learning together. This afternoon, we will see, hear and experience scholarship, teaching and learning through the presentation of one of our distinguished professors, Dr. Jon Lyon, on the "Greening of Merrimack." Thereby, hopefully we will begin to better understand what it means to be Merrimack College.

I enthusiastically invite you and welcome you to see, feel, experience, know and understand the reality that is Merrimack College.