

LCC INAUGURATION OF DR. MARLENE WALL as PRESIDENT

Comments by Art DeFehr

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Students, faculty and staff, members of the Board and friends from near and far....

Welcome to the campus of LCC International University and to this very special event.

We have all come to celebrate one of the most important moments in the life of a University - the installation of a new leader.

Dr. Marlene Wall brings her many and varied gifts to provide leadership at this very important time in the history of LCC.

Many of us believe that the very existence of LCC is a miracle where God has revealed his hand and intentions. The miracle consists of the many committed men and women who have given of their gifts and talents to make LCC a reality.

Even a miracle requires special intervention and that is the leadership of unique and committed people on campus, on the board, in the Government and donors - all of whom have come forward at the right time.

The role of President of a University is the most critical of all and that makes the installation of Dr. Wall such an important event.

LCC is a unique institution as it straddles fault lines of educational philosophy, geography, language, religion and politics. Where do you find a leader who can comprehend and manage this incredible array of challenges?

When a person is confronted by an existential challenge there is a saying that your whole life has prepared you for that special moment.

Well Dr. Wall - and allow me to call you Marlene - your whole life and especially the last 22 years have prepared you for this moment.

Marlene was born in South America, lived and studied in both Canada and the United States and then added 22 years of experience and increasing responsibility at LCC. The ability to first recognize and then manage across these cultural, professional, geographic and national divisions can be stated in a short and simple sentence but it is an absolutely critical factor in the success of this position.

Marlene, you are at the top of a very short list of people who bring the right experience plus the critical talents matched by competence and incredible dedication.

Why is the appointment of the next President of LCC so important?

Most Universities can describe their past and present and there is usually reasonable consensus about the nature of their future. LCC is different. We certainly know the past and present but the trajectory of the future is much less certain.

This can be understood as either a problem or an opportunity. It is the opportunity that gets me excited and keeps bringing me back.

There are some lines of poetry that speak to this.

*Two men looked through prison bars
One saw mud, the other stars.*

Most of us are here and part of LCC because we see the stars. What are these stars?

LCC has the opportunity to bring educational innovation

LCC is uniquely positioned to look beyond the borders of Lithuania and consider a large and challenged political geography as its natural market.

LCC represents an opportunity to create dialogue and understanding across religious fault lines.

LCC provides opportunity for faculty and staff from other parts of the world to move beyond their comfort zone

Finally and certainly not least, LCC has the promise of taking the most important resource of our world - the next generation and to help shape them into global citizens who can comfortably take their education and hopefully values anywhere in the world and make it a better place.

Leadership is so important because there is no natural constituency that will pay the bills or solve problems. That strength must come from within this evolving community. That requires leadership.

We are also at LCC today because we not only believe in this vision but because we know that Marlene with all her gifts and effort cannot accomplish this alone.

There is the well-worn proverb that states " it takes a village to raise a child. "

Allow me to paraphrase

"It takes a community to create and sustain an institution like LCC".

LCC started with a Community of people with historical ties to each other and to the difficult political history of this region. The community has expanded to include a variety of institutions, nationalities and traditions and now includes our many friends in Lithuania and beyond and very critically our alumni.

Our very presence here today says that we are all part of the Community that not only shares the vision but also the responsibility to shape that future full of challenges and opportunities.

Leona and I feel privileged and honored to have been part of this adventure from the very beginning. LCC has not only become part of our life but quite literally part of our family.

We celebrate the arrival of new students and the graduation of impressive young adults. We enjoy watching our competent and confident grads return as members of faculty, staff and board.

We are amazed at the continuous arrival of great international faculty - many bringing their gifts as volunteers.

We also acknowledge the many friends in Lithuania - from Government, churches, business, other Universities and more who stand with us and at times have played roles essential to the survival and success of LCC.

Marlene, look at this marvelous crowd of friends. They have come for two reasons.

They all believe in the importance and vision of LCC and its mission

But today they have come because they believe that you are that special person that can lead LCC International University into a future that will continue to shape lives and contribute to a better world

Thank you for coming today. Thank you for your support of Marlene and for the commitment to be part of this amazing miracle.