

1981 Distinguished Professor
Frank McLaughlin
Graduation Speech -- Summer Graduation, 1981

Mr. President, Graduates, Friends of the University of North Florida.

It's nice to have Dr. Carpenter back with us today. Earlier this morning he was reminiscing with several faculty members about his days as President of this institution. He told us how happy he was to be back with such pleasant individuals and how this campus brought forth memories of many happy occasions. And then someone asked him about problems. He thought a moment - - finally he said that looking back over his entire tenure he could only recall two. I believe he said one was called faculty - - and the other one was called students.

Today I cannot speak for our students but I would like to say a few words from a faculty perspective. During the past two years, this institution has received a lot of publicity, much of it surrounding the questions of merger and four-year status. On the whole, it has been good publicity but most of it has necessarily centered on the needs of this university and the needs of this community. Because of these pressing questions, many of us, and that includes faculty, students, and alumni, have failed to say enough about this University. I plan to do just a little bit of that today, but in my few minutes I cannot talk about the entire University, therefore I will concentrate on one area that is vitally important to this faculty and to the education of these graduates. That is the area of academic support. For those of you unfamiliar with academic jargon, these are the people who provide the services that help professors better accomplish their responsibilities.

Academic support includes a lot of individuals. For example, it includes the computer people. If you ask them what they do, they will tell you that they provide us with 23 million bites of memory, accessible in seven (7) different languages, at 94 locations throughout this campus. I suspect that I am like most of you in the audience. I don't care about all that; but I do know that they have enriched the educational experience of each and every one of you graduating today.

Academic support includes the audio-visual personnel. They provide us with those overhead projectors that our graduates have seen us use so often. They also insure that movie cameras and TV monitors are only a telephone call away. Academic support also includes the secretaries. They type exams and prepare class handouts. They schedule classes and tell professors when to go - and yes - sometimes where to go. It would be a pleasure to talk about any of that area because I have never heard a professor say that our facilities provided less services than do similar facilities at other institutions.

But today, we will talk about none of these areas for today is the day of another area of academic support. Today we will dedicate the Thomas G. Carpenter Library. One thing can be said for Tom Carpenter. He has mastered well the second principle of higher-level

management, which is "If you are going to let someone name something after you, make sure that it is something good." Our library is something good. It is a major asset of this University and this community.

The library had its inception 18 months prior to the opening of the University. The library staff was told to begin classes with 100,000 volumes. Textbooks in library science said that it was impossible to assemble that many volumes in that short of period of time. My own memory of the library goes back to a very hot month of August just prior to the opening of those initial classes. The library staff was shelving those 100,000 volumes. Several weeks later someone asked Andrew Farkas to describe the greatest advancement in library science in the present century. He quickly replied "air conditioning" because those books were shelved with no air conditioning and very few windows.

Yes, the library staff met that initial deadline and they have continued, during the past nine (9) years, to meet each and every commitment. The library has grown from a single building, to an expansion, which doubled the original size, to the beautiful new structure, which we will dedicate today. The initial collection of 100,000 has grown to 450,000 and includes books, periodicals, newspapers, films, government documents, legal services, recorded music, sheet music, and many other items.

The most impressive feature of the library, however, is not the amount of floor space it occupies or the physical volume of the collection. Rather, it is the fact that the primary guiding force in its development has been the present and future needs of this faculty. If we have done our job correctly, and I believe we have, then our library is a unique and valuable resource. It is "tailor made" for our students, for our programs, for this community, and for the citizens, which this university serves. I would like to thank Dr. Carpenter, the library staff, and everyone responsible for this most important facet of academic support.

Perhaps I have talked too much about our facilities and not enough about our graduates. After all, alumni and friends are our most important assets. Therefore I would like to close with one thought for our graduates. I have recently enjoyed reading a series of articles in the Florida Times Union about "Why I love where I live." As you go forward, I hope you will occasionally take the time to talk about why you like where you live, why you like where you work, why you like who you married, and yes, even why you like where you went to school. For you, it's good psychological medicine. For us, it's academic support and that type of academic support is just as important as movie cameras, computers, or library books.

And so, from faculty to graduates, we enjoyed having you here. We hope you enjoyed it. We wish you Godspeed and good luck.