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## **State of the University Address**

October 1, 2008

Kevin M. Ross, President

Good afternoon esteemed faculty and staff, students and special guests. It is my great honor to stand before you today bearing a message of the continued health and infinite optimism for the future of Lynn University.

And this morning, I want to linger a moment on that message. Over the course of the next few minutes I will point with pride to your distinct accomplishments – individually and collectively. I come bearing news that, I predict, will excite you about those successes and, I hope, ready you for the work that lay ahead – work about which you all are so enthusiastic already.

But before I get there, I wanted to start a bit further back – at the beginning. Have a look at the seal that rests at the center of this podium and perhaps even on the tabletops in front of you. That is the seal of this, our university. I would like to point something out. Something specific. It's something I'm not sure they highlight during the orientation process. And in light of the headlines you've no doubt been reading in recent days, it occurred to me that this was a good time to bring this again to your attention.

There's one distinguishing feature I wanted to point out to you. The palm tree you see there exists. On campus. It sits off the patio of the Student Center near the lake. It is about 60 feet tall. And it has a very distinctive bend in it.

The reason I wanted to point this out to you is this: that tree has grown and flourished on this campus – in stubborn resistance to buffeting winds, spiraling storms, lengthy dry spells, pronounced foot traffic and probably even a few climbing attempts. It has survived hurricanes and tropical storms. And it has likely survived much more than we'll ever know.

A parent recently suggested to me that we remove the palm tree from our seal and replace it with something more academic. I told him, politely as I could, that such a revision was impossible.

That tree doesn't just say we live in sunny South Florida. To me, it says that we, as an institution, are very much like that one particular tree. We are tough. We are resilient. And we're looking awfully good for our age. Maybe it's all the sun we've been getting lately. Because, you see, just like that tree we have weathered adversity in the past.

We have toiled to grow a reputation, to build a physical infrastructure, and to mine the potential of ourselves and the students that entrust us with their education. And here at a time when many are worried about the storms spiraling off Wall Street, I'm here to tell you that you need not worry.

Today we are enjoying the sure footedness that comes with the muscles built in laborious struggles. Today we are relishing the view that comes after a long stretch of close care. And despite the economic black cloud that is settling, we are fine. And will be fine.

I'm here to give you confidence today; here to tell you about the strength of this university and your continued role in the life of this place, and, more importantly, in the lives of the students we serve.

So with those assurances out of the way, let me now assure you further – with specifics.

In the past year, we have met many rigorous challenges and seen incredible progress. And in the year ahead, we will seize numerous opportunities and witness further advancements.

So today is a day of reflection and anticipation - a day to celebrate all that we accomplished yesterday and all that we will take on tomorrow.

Last May, we all gathered together to celebrate the culmination of an incredible academic year at our 43<sup>rd</sup> commencement exercises, featuring the first female white house press secretary and best-selling author, Dee Dee Myers, and Lynn's oldest graduate, 79-year-old Marvin Miller.

Over the past academic year, we also witnessed many incredible additions and enhancements to our university, including the completion and dedication of Perper Plaza – the meeting place at the crossroads of our campus – through a \$1 million gift from university friends Harold and Mary Perper.

Our partner Phoenix Foods oversaw the refurbishment and enhancement of our cafeteria and food services. And through a very generous donation from the Boeing Corporation, our School of Aeronautics accumulated two flight simulators.

One of the priorities of our strategic plan is to establish a new culture of philanthropy, and these are just a few examples of our progress.

We are fortunate to have many longstanding friends stepping up to support the university, and we are also welcoming the support of many new friends along the way.

We are very happy to have with us today one of Lynn University's best friends, our Board of Trustees chair, Mrs. Christine E. Lynn. Thank you, Christine, for your continuous support and dedication to our university.

I am proud to announce that over the past fiscal year, Lynn University received \$4.5 million in charitable cash and \$2.71 million in pledges. This is a 44.5 percent increase in charitable cash from the previous year... and an increase of almost 76 percent from two years before.

All of these gifts display the unwavering – and mounting – confidence that our friends and community members have in our university. They believe in what we are doing at Lynn – and so do our alumni. Our alumni around the nation are more involved than ever before, as witnessed by successful receptions and new leadership in the local, New York and Washington, D.C. alumni councils. We have also doubled our alumni giving participation over the past two years. Over 400 alumni attend last year's alumni weekend on campus, and nearly a quarter of the total number of gifts we received came from our alumni.

We know that continuous enhancements and advancements are necessary to keep up with the rapidly changing world, which is why we launched our 15-year strategic plan, Lynn 2020. We are only in our third year of the plan, but our progress has been phenomenal. To date, we have completed 6 of our 52 strategic priorities, and another 34 are currently in progress.

And today I am thrilled to announce that since launching our strategic plan only three years ago, we have already raised more than \$23 million in cash and pledges in support of Lynn 2020. This is an incredible sign of confidence in our institution and our momentum – and we've only just begun.

In order to provide the best experience for our students, we need to continue to have the best leaders for our institution, the leaders who best fit into our unique academic environment. Since the launch of our strategic plan, I am proud to announce that we have welcomed some outstanding individuals to our already strong leadership team, from cabinet members and deans to faculty and key staff members.

Our latest recruit, Delsie Phillips, came to us from Haverford College and the College Board to fill the position of Vice President for Enrollment Management – and as I will explain later, she has definitely proven that we made the right choice.

We are thrilled to have men's soccer coach John Rootes now on our coaching staff and helping us maintain our strong tradition of athletic excellence. John and our soccer team have been having an incredible year so far with an undefeated 9-0 record, and they are playing against Tampa this afternoon at 3, so I hope that everyone will go out and support them.

We also welcomed the New York Philharmonic's Renee Siebert as one of four distinguished artists-in-residence to join our Conservatory of Music this summer, and we are thrilled to have all of them instructing our students.

I would like to thank all of our faculty and staff for warmly welcoming these individuals and others into the Lynn family. And you know how it is with family... sometimes you just need to brag about them, which is what I plan to do right now.

Our faculty and staff had an exceptional year, and I am proud to have each and every one of them carrying the Lynn name, like...

- College of Hospitality Dean Mike Hampton, who was named to the Top 25 Extraordinary Minds list in hospitality.
- Or Professor Erika Grodzki, who was a Fulbright award recipient and will be teaching in Poland. Actually, Erika is now one of five distinguished Fulbright recipients at Lynn. Our other Fulbright recipients have been awarded teaching and research scholarships at institutions in Costa Rica, Japan, Romania and Armenia.
- Or Lynn's first lady, my wife Kristen – who I am pleased to have here today – who was appointed President of the Junior League of Boca Raton. The Junior League's motto is "Women Building Better Communities," and I have seen these women work – we should all be thrilled that they have decided to use their powers for good instead of evil.

I know that there were many more outstanding accomplishments by our faculty and staff last year, and I apologize that I am unable to list the hundreds of awards, publications and presentations right now – but please know that we are very proud of all of you.

Also this past year Lynn's internship program won the 2008 best practices award from the Cooperative Education & Internship Association. Our university was also a finalist – the only university as a finalist – in the *South Florida Business Journal's* Best Places to Work competition for the second year in a row.

And our athletic teams, athletes and coaches continued to dominate. We have won 18 national championships – and plan on more. Last year both our men's and women's tennis teams won the Southeast Regional Championship, and our men's soccer and women's tennis teams earned Sunshine State Conference championship titles.

Men's golf coach Chris Greenwood and women's tennis coach Michael Perez were named 2008 SSC Coaches of the Year, and Lynn student-athlete Natalie Feller was named president of the SSC Student Advisory Committee and will represent the SSC on the national level. This is the first time ever that a Lynn student has held this position. We are all very proud of Natalie and all of our other outstanding student-athletes.

Natalie and fellow Lynn student-athlete Christie Schade were also honored by *Diverse* magazine as 2008 Arthur Ashe Jr. sports scholars, and Lynn baseball player Gabe MacDougall was selected as the 2008 *ESPN the Magazine* Academic All-American of the Year.

Last year the overall academic GPA for our student-athletes was above a 3.3. We had 44 student-athletes named all-SSC honors, 18 student-athletes named all-region honors, and 19 student-athletes named all-American honors.

Lynn University proudly chooses to compete in the Sunshine State Conference – the number one conference in the NCAA Division II.

I would also like to recognize the Office of Marketing and Communication and all of our university Web Watchers who have worked so diligently to prepare for the launch of our new Web site, and I would especially like to thank Gibran Soto and his team for their endless dedication to this project. Their focus has been on usability and ease of use because we want people to feel as welcome on our Web site as when they walk on our campus.

While we have celebrated many achievements over the past year, we have sadly lost some of the people who made those achievements possible. I would like to take a minute to remember some of our Lynn family members and all that they did for our university, like:

- Board of Overseers member and endower of the Employee of the Year program, Charles Lindemann.
- Hannifan Center for Career Development and Internships' volunteer and mentor to many, Sidney Shiller.
- Former Associate Vice President for Development, Larry Cowan.
- And Christine Hartwick, wife of College of Education Dean Patrick Hartwick.

This past year the world has also witnessed tragedies at other institutions – like the shooting at Northern Illinois University. Even though this was a horrific event, we know that there is a time to lament, and then there is a time to learn.

You probably notice that we are continuously updating and enhancing our security measures, and as better methods are discovered and newer technologies emerge, we will integrate them into our plan. We never want anyone to feel threatened on our campus, and the safety of our students, faculty and staff is a top priority.

As we have underscored in the past, it is everyone's job to keep our campus safe – but to help everyone out, we have also recently hired someone whose sole job it is to keep our campus safe. We are glad to now have with us William Testa, our new Chief of Campus Safety. During his 29 years with the Palm Beach County Sheriff's office, Bill served as commander of the Emergency Response Bureau, and he will now be a key member of Lynn's Crisis Management Team.

Our Crisis Management Team has already had a busy year – even before our students stepped into their first class – because of a very active hurricane season, but we are fortunate to have been spared any direct impact or damage from these storms so far.

Another disaster that our institution has dodged so far is the impact of the state's current economic situation... except that miss is due to our planning and not pressure systems.

A recently published article entitled "Is Florida the Sunset State?" in *Time* magazine stated: "There's trouble in paradise. We're facing our worst real estate meltdown since the depression. We've got a water crisis, insurance crisis, environmental crisis and budget crisis to go with our

housing crisis. We're the first in the nation in mortgage fraud, second in foreclosures, last in high school graduation rates. Our consumer confidence just hit an all-time low..."

We understand that our state is going through tough times, but we have been in Florida for quite a while – through the high times and the low times – so we know to maintain a long view.

Another person who maintains a long view is the executive editor of *Florida Trend* magazine, Mark Howard, who addressed the “trouble in paradise” claim in a recent editorial. He said, “I find most of those stories vaguely ridiculous. In Florida, there is always trouble – and there is almost always opportunity. If you don't like the way things are here, stick around for a year or so. Things won't be the way that they were, but they will be interesting, and problematic, in a different way.”

Lynn University has stuck around for more than a year or so, and we know that things won't always stay the way that they are. We know that there is always trouble, and we know that there is always opportunity.

The state's economic situation has filtered down and taken a toll on the state's public institutions of higher education. But one of the strengths of being an independent institution is that we determine our own fate because our major funding sources do not come from the state government.

As Ed Moore, the president of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida pointed out, Florida's independent institutions are less susceptible to state cuts than state schools; have had a successful legislative session in a very bad year; and are growing and well-positioned to grow more.

And today I am proud to say that the state of Lynn University is strong – and continuing to get stronger. We budgeted for these turbulent times, and although people are feeling the economic crunch all around them, we are taking steps to ensure that our students, faculty and staff are not feeling it on our campus. We have become addicted to planning – and this is a good addiction.

At Lynn, the number of full-time faculty has increased by 11 percent over the past three years, and right now, I am proud to say that Lynn University is actively hiring even more faculty and staff.

Our compensation study and subsequent raises for more than 1/3 of our faculty and staff last year is not the only way that we are showing our appreciation for our faculty and staff. We have revamped our employee service awards program; added a vision plan at the university's expense; offered numerous wellness programs; added a third medical plan option; and even hosted a take your dog to work event.

While budget cuts continue to become a growing problem among colleges and universities, they are not the only higher education concern making headlines. Parents and students are feeling the sharp sting of the rising costs of college tuition.

Nationally, college tuition increased by an average of just over 6 percent between the '07 and '08 academic years. If we continue at this rate, the cost of college tuition in the future will be prohibitive – and it is already causing problems for many potential students. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reports that as many as 3.2 million college-ready students will forgo a bachelor's degree this decade because of financial barriers.

One New York University student went as far as e-mailing thousands of people and asking each of them to contribute \$2.50 towards his college expenses. According to *Time* magazine, he has raised about \$6,000 using this approach.

So what can we do when it gets to the point where students have to resort to begging on the side of the information superhighway?

For the second year in a row, we have kept our tuition rate increase at 3 percent – that is half the national average. While other schools are being forced to increase student fees to counter budget deficits, we have eliminated most of our fees.

We are also continuously working to contain the costs for our students. This year we awarded over \$15 million in scholarships to our students to help make a Lynn education more affordable, and more than 62 percent of our students received some form of financial aid.

And although we are an independent institution, we will continue to vigorously advocate to ensure that our elected officials understand the implications of their decisions that impact our students and their ability to afford a college education.

Lynn University is proud to be an independent institution and a member of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida. Did you know that nearly a third of all degrees awarded in Florida come from independent institutions, yet they receive only 3 percent of the state's higher education budget?

However, there is one very important piece of aid available to Florida students who decide to attend in-state independent institutions – the Florida Resident Access Grant (or the FRAG). This is extremely valuable to the Lynn student body because last year 34 percent of our undergraduate students were originally from Florida, and this year, we added another 82 Florida residents to our enrollment. In 2007, the FRAG allowed 496 of our students – who received a total of more than \$1.3 million – the opportunity to study at an independent institution.

But the future of many students' choices to attend Lynn and other independent institutions was placed in jeopardy earlier this year when Tallahassee attempted to severely reduce, and in some cases eliminate, the FRAG. Our students, faculty and staff rallied together to fight for the continuation of this aid – including showing the after effects of this harmful proposal by placing hundreds of empty chairs along the side of Military Trail. Leading the demonstration was one of our incredible student leaders, Bernard Londoni, who is from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and doesn't even receive the FRAG but knew it was important to his fellow students.

Through the efforts of Lynn students like Bernard and other advocates of independent education, the FRAG was successfully renewed with only a minor decrease in aid. But we are not out of the crosshairs yet, and we will continue to fight and advocate for our Florida students.

These are just a few ways that we are working to contain the cost of a college education, and we will continue to work to make a Lynn education more affordable for our students. We realize that we were part of this economic issue and that it is an issue that will never be fully solved but needs to be constantly managed. So let me tell you how we are working to manage it...

From the '01 to '03 academic years, Lynn University was ranked the third highest among a group of 12 peer institutions in tuition and required fee charges – and for us, that was too high. Because of our measures to contain costs through lower tuition increases and fee eliminations, we repositioned our self into 6<sup>th</sup> place in the '06 academic year... and we have worked to maintain that position ever since.

But as Warren Buffett stated, “Cost is what you pay. Value is what you get.”

We want each student and their parents to feel that they are getting the best value at Lynn, and to do so, we know that we need to continuously improve upon our experiences and learning outcomes.

At Lynn, we are constantly updating and enhancing our programs to keep pace with the rapidly changing world, but we are doing it while still maintaining our identity. And it has been a balancing act. We are turning up the dial on academic rigor, while adding and enhancing support structures. We are pursuing ambitious goals, while addressing pressing needs. We are offering a liberal arts education, while providing professional experience and expertise. And we are staying nimble as an institution, while gaining a reputation among our peers.

We have had to make some hard decisions along the way. We restructured some of our existing programs, reshaped our Ph.D. program, and have constructed an academic environment concentrating on a largely traditional, residential undergraduate population.

Our CIO Chris Boniforti and the entire information technology staff have been doing an incredible job enhancing our university, and they are receiving recognition for their expertise outside of Lynn. Both Chris and our Director of Information Systems, Maria Piret, were invited to participate at Educause 2008, the leading organization whose mission is to advance higher education by promoting the intelligent use of information technology.

We have also had a very productive year with our Center for Instructional Innovation, our first-rate teaching workshop designed to improve instructional skills and coach faculty in the creative use of modern technology. We welcomed Dr. Rebecca “Bec” Andre, formerly of the Ohio State University, as our director, and she oversaw the development of our student technology literacy program. One main aspect of our vision is to be recognized as one of the most innovative small universities in the country, and to fulfill that vision, we need to make sure that our faculty and staff have the necessary resources to bring innovation into our classrooms.

We previously brought innovation guru Tom Kelley to our campus, and later this year – on December 2 – we will be hosting Andrew Zolli, an innovation expert on foresight and global trends, who will share his knowledge with us through a presentation on “Excellence in Innovation: Exploring the Road Ahead.”

Our university’s vision not only stresses innovation, but also internationalism. And right now our students represent 84 countries. And I am proud to say that for the third year in a row, *U.S. News & World Report* has recognized Lynn University as having the highest percentage of international students in the south in our category.

We serve students nationally and internationally, and we are enhancing Florida by importing students who will become skilled graduates – many of whom will stay and enter the state’s workforce. About 3,500 of our more than 10,000 alumni currently live in Florida.

Our international students are among our most engaged and involved students on campus, and this year we are reviewing, augmenting and enhancing our International Center to provide the best services possible for all of our students.

While it is important for us to bring the world to our campus, it is also important for us to send our campus out into the world. We are currently expanding our partner campus options. In addition to our connection with American College Dublin, we are exploring collaborations with St. Petersburg University of Humanities and Social Sciences in Russia and with Tel-Hai University in Israel – and we will continue seeking out partners on other continents as well.

A global emphasis is a powerful component of a Lynn education that we will continue to promote, but we will not forget our own country’s place on the globe. That is why we have introduced an American Studies program to ensure that our students are also getting a strong grounding in our country’s founding principles, histories and lessons.

But perhaps the most impactful enhancement of the year is the launching of our new core curriculum, the Dialogues of Learning. This unique academic endeavor, which took almost two years in the making, is a critical component of Lynn 2020 and will strengthen our efforts to prepare and educate our students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is our hope and expectation that our graduates will leave Lynn better prepared than others to write, analyze, speak and participate in a global economy and society.

Simply put, the Dialogues of Learning are about value. The Dialogues will make a Lynn degree – and all of the experiences along the way to getting that degree – worth even more.

Many of you may have heard recently that we have done away with algebra. Well, that is not entirely true. We have made our courses more rigorous, practical and applicable to today’s and tomorrow’s challenges.

Instead of taking a course called algebra, we will be incorporating algebra into a course entitled “Introduction to Quantitative Reasoning.” In this course, students will study very timely issues

like loan agreements, the credit industry, and a variety of other mathematical models and concepts that impact everyday life.

They will not be sitting around crunching numbers, but will be engaged in an interactive learning experience designed to include writing and oral presentations – and not just in one required course, but in all of their classes over four years.

With our new core curriculum, we are not a faculty-centered institution. We are not a student-centered institution. We are now a learning-centered institution.

And people are taking notice...

Carol Schneider, president of the Association of American Colleges and Universities - the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education, recently stated:

“Lynn’s newly articulated educational vision is inspirational. With the new general education curriculum, the university will ensure that Lynn students graduate richly prepared for life, work and citizenship in this volatile global century. By organizing to ensure that all students achieve a broad set of learning outcomes and integrate what they are learning across their studies, Lynn has created a dynamic and coherent design for the college curriculum and for student accomplishment ... I’m sure your students will benefit enormously from this new direction and I applaud you all for taking the lead to develop and implement this curriculum so quickly.”

This year, our students are taking courses and completing learning outcomes that fall into three dialogues: The Dialogues of Self and Society; The Dialogues of Belief and Reason; and The Dialogues of Justice and Civic Life. Each of these dialogues will have both a global and domestic focus, and students will also complete four years of courses in quantitative reasoning and scientific literacy. Through these dialogues, students will be asking these eternal questions: Who am I and who are you? What do we believe and why? And what is right and what creates a just society?

They will also participate in a January-term, or J-term, where they will be offered academic study abroad opportunities, internships, conferences and other experiences that will directly support what they are learning in the classroom. Just a few of the experiences that will be offered this winter during our inaugural J-term are studying and then witnessing the Presidential Inauguration, performing an original work Off-Broadway in New York, working at the ESPN Winter X-Games and traveling to Ireland or South Africa. And as we continue to develop our J-term courses, we will constantly examine how we can make the study abroad experiences more affordable and accessible for our students.

Because we are a small university, we are able to maintain a 17:1 student-faculty ratio, which allows our students to get the best possible experience from the Dialogues. The Dialogues are precisely that – dialogues, discussions, conversations, questions, exchanges of ideas... You cannot have every student in a large, overcrowded lecture hall participate in an interactive

learning experience with a professor. And that is exactly why we do not have any large lecture halls on our campus.

In my speech last year, I quoted Woodrow Wilson as saying “Changing a college curriculum is like moving a graveyard” – and that isn’t true with us.

Not everyone is capable of restructuring a core curriculum in such a way, and we have two factors that contributed largely to our success. The first is our Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Cynthia Patterson, who has been the prime mover behind this endeavor. I would also like to thank Katrina Carter-Tellison, our core committees and all of our outstanding faculty and staff, who put an incredible amount of time and effort into the dialogues. I have thanked you repeatedly in the past for all of your hard work – and I will continue to do so – because this truly is a remarkable accomplishment, and we are all very proud of all of you.

The second factor contributing to the success of our new core is our status as a small, independent university. Because we are independent, we are able to pursue something as edgy, innovative and transformative as the dialogues of learning without external constraints.

In describing the shaping of small, private universities in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, John R. Thelin, a professor at the University of Kentucky, wrote: “Although the commitment to smallness also began as a belief, we shall see that it has stood the test of rigorous empirical scrutiny by social and behavioral science researchers over the decades since.”

Thelin ends his essay by saying that independent colleges have remained small by design but have proven to be large by effect – and I believe that Lynn University is a prime example.

Right now there is no university out there quite like Lynn – and with the launching of our new core curriculum, we are now in an even more distinctive place. The Dialogues are now the cornerstone of our academic experience. They now define who we are – and therefore, who our students are and what they are capable of in the future.

Sixty-three percent of this year’s college freshman said that academic quality was a very important factor for them in selecting a college, according to a survey by UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute. And with our new core curriculum, we expect even more students will take notice of Lynn.

And as student interest continues to grow in Lynn, we are now focusing our Admissions efforts on fit. Which students best fit into our academic environment? Which students can we best serve with our programs?

This year through planning and utilizing our financial forecasting model, we had the opportunity to change our approach in Admissions, and by not focusing solely on growth, we now have the luxury of being more intentional in structuring our incoming classes.

During a recent new student orientation event, I was standing in the back of this room speaking with a parent who said that he was thrilled that his daughter was attending Lynn, but he believed

that she would transfer at some point to a larger school. Well, only two weeks into the school year, I ran into that same parent again, and he stopped to tell me that there was no way that his daughter would ever transfer schools. She loves it here at Lynn and couldn't imagine being anywhere else. That right there is fit.

I am happy to report that we just admitted one of our most impressive freshman classes ever. We took this class based on fit – and we recognize that not every student fits the Dialogues and the Dialogues do not fit every student.

Our new freshman class is not only an incredible fit – they are an incredible class. Nationwide, the mean SAT scores have been declining over the past few years until hitting a stagnant point this year. While the this year's national SAT scores remain the same as 2007, our freshmen's mean SAT score has increased by 26 points over the same period. And the mean SAT score for our honors program students has increased by 57 points.

These incredible students have names, and I mentioned some of them during our Freshmen Convocation, like Gabriela Canals, a female golf national champion from the Dominican Republic and Fred Apaloo, a member of the Ghana Red Cross Society Committee. You also heard about a day in the life of elementary education major Libby Georges in the earlier video.

Every student in this class was handpicked because we believe they fit our university, and our denials were 19 percent higher than last year. I cannot wait to see all of the accomplishments that our current class will add to their lists while they are at Lynn.

And we are pleased to say that we already have a surge of applications in progress from students applying for *next* year. We expect this trend to continue, and we are opting for careful, limited growth based on fit.

Right now I would like all of our Admissions team members to stand and be recognized. Thank you for all of your innovative and hard work in admitting an incredible class that truly does fit into our institution. Delsie Phillips could not be here today because she is out on the road right now working very hard on our behalf.

We do not take for granted the caliber of students coming our way, and we are very aware of the rising amount of competition among Florida institutions of higher education. Florida's public institutions are unable to hold the amount of incoming students, classrooms are overcrowded, and places within these institutions are becoming more competitive.

This influx of students and lack of spaces has led to the emergence of alternative and competitive options. Community colleges are now dropping the term "community" and offering four-year degrees. Also, as the *Sun-Sentinel* recently reported, we have been seeing a significant rise in the for-profit sector, which has been having success with underserved populations.

One of the principles of our strategic plan is that "planning should be cognizant of the competition of nearby and regional colleges, especially their programs and pricing." We are

paying attention to our competition, and we know that to hold our own in the incursion of college options, we need to make sure that people understand the value of a Lynn education. And our new core is not only increasing that value, but as we continue to define the Lynn experience, we expect that this cohesive, four-year program will help us retain our students.

The launching of our core curriculum was to focus on the traditional, four-year, undergraduate residential students. We still have some work in front of us with the Dialogues as we roll out the subsequent years, but we also now have more energy to continue our focus on our colleges' professional and graduate programs. We are in the process of creating strategic plans for each of our academic colleges, and these plans will help continue to enhance and shape both our undergraduate and graduate programs.

One professional program that we are now focusing our energy on is the Education Doctorate. Lynn's Donald E. and Helen L. Ross College of Education has been invited to participate among a prestigious group of universities in the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate. Led by the famed Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, this project is working to reimagine and rewrite the Ed.D. The Carnegie Foundation's charge is "to do and perform all things necessary to encourage, uphold, and dignify the profession of the teacher and the cause of higher education."

Lynn University is one of the few independent institutions to be invited to participate in this project, and we are the smallest university to engage in the project to date. We are participating in this project alongside institutions such as Penn State University, the University of Southern California and Vanderbilt University.

By signing on to the Carnegie Project, we are publically signaling our intent to build a practitioner's Ed.D. program at Lynn, and we are planning to welcome our first doctoral students next fall.

The Carnegie Foundation... the Association of American Colleges and Universities... EDUCAUSE... These are the types of prominent organizations in American higher education that are taking notice of the distinct and distinguished work happening at Lynn University.

As we continue to see changes at Lynn and among our state's other institutions, we will also be watching to see the changes that emerge nationally in the realm of higher education. Recently, after five years of effort, we saw the Higher Education Reauthorization Act renewed. The act's provisions include dozens of grant programs for colleges and students; hundreds of new reporting requirements on institutions; crack downs on conflict of interest in student loan programs; pressure for institutions to rein in tuition; and easier access to financial aid for for-profits.

And on November 4, we have a very important decision to make when we walk into the polling booth. The outcome of the next presidential election will directly affect the state of higher education, and we have two candidates with two different higher education policies.

I encourage each of you to learn the facts, make an educated decision and get out and vote. Just over two weeks ago, our students held a “Lynn Votes” event in an effort to make sure that everyone who can vote will do so. You still have 15 days left to register. Be involved in the political process and be involved in our community.

We are extremely proud to have a strong spirit of civic activism here at Lynn – a spirit that stems back to our roots and the founding nuns of Marymount College. These intrepid, well-educated women with a strong social conscience ran educational programs for the children of migrant farm workers. And they marched through downtown Boca Raton in support of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

And I am proud that their strong spirit of activism carries on today at Lynn. We do not have a specific program or center on our campus dedicated to civic engagement. What we have are compassionate students, faculty and staff who see a need and answer the call. And no one ever asks them to do this...

You have heard me speak earlier about our incredible new class, but now let me tell you about the amazing group of students that they are joining. And even though we are a small school, we are having a huge impact in our community and across the continents.

Last year our student-athletes contributed 1,600 hours of community service and raised \$5,000 for the Make-A-Wish Campus Wish-Makers Program. Through their hard work, South Floridian Gabe Kagan had his wish come true – he got to meet his idol Chad Pennington, formerly of the New York Jets, during a men’s soccer match at Lynn last year.

Last April, 24 teams made up of more than 400 students, faculty and staff stayed up all night participating in Relay for Life and raised \$30,500 for the American Cancer Society.

And compassionate does not even begin to describe the character of our students who traveled to Cambodia. During a Psychology Department study trip to the country last year, some of our students came across a school on the edge of a dump, where children received rice for their families in exchange for attending classes. That sole encounter ignited the hearts of our students and launched a major Lynn fundraiser. They saw a need, stepped up and launched a successful campaign to raise money for that rice. So far, Lynn students have raised around \$22,000 for the school.

Many members of the Lynn community have also been helping the global community in conjunction with Food for the Poor, a worldwide relief agency with a 96 percent charitable commitment ratio that is included on Forbes’ list of the 200 Largest U.S. Charities. Over spring break, a group of 19 students and faculty traveled to Haiti through the generosity of an anonymous donor to assist in the organization’s efforts.

Lynn student Michelle Donaldson stated, “This trip was the greatest experience of my life. I am forever attached to Haiti and doing my part to help the country reach its full potential.”

Since returning from the trip, involved students and staff have formed a new student organization on campus – Students for the Poor – and have raised more than \$5,000 for Food for the Poor to help finance the construction of two single-family homes in Haiti.

Our Fashion Management students volunteered at and held a fundraising fashion show for the Wayne Barton Center – a tutoring and mentoring center for disadvantaged youth in Boca Raton.

And our Business and Management students and Student Government Association collected more than 5,000 cans during a Thanksgiving food drive benefiting Palm Beach Harvest.

Our university's actions and spirit of activism – both in our area and abroad – is just one way that we are letting the world know about the special character of our students, faculty and staff.

We will also sustain our role as a resource to the community by continuing to host forums, speakers and symposia.

Over the past academic year, we welcomed Senator Ted Deutch and Representative Adam Hasner for a public forum on property taxes, and the top Haitian Studies scholars from around the world converged on our campus for the Haitian Studies Association 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. We were even paid a visit by C-SPAN and Book TV in conjunction with the 2008 presidential campaign.

It would take a very long time to list all of the extraordinary speakers who came to Lynn last year, so here is just a small sampling:

- The Chairman of the Board and former CEO of Harley Davidson, Jeff Bleustein, came to campus for the College of Business and Management's CEO Speaker Series.
- Colin Reed, the chief executive officer of Gaylord Entertainment, addressed our College of Hospitality Management students through the Lynnovations Speaker Series.
- Maureen Corrigan, former NPR book critic and celebrated author, columnist, professor and editor, spent three days on campus as a scholar-in-residence in the College of Arts and Sciences.
- And author and *Miami Herald* columnist Carl Hiaasen and Pulitzer Prize-winning author and historian Doris Kearns Goodwin spoke during the Dively Frontier in Globalization Lecture Series.

In fact, we will be launching this year's Dively series with former Clinton advisor Paul Begala and former White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card on Friday, October 31, and I am sure that they will share with us some last-minute political insight just in time for Election Day.

As our gift back to the community, we will continue to present concerts to our friends and neighbors year round. The Conservatory of Music is one of the things that we are most proud of, and we want to share their talents with everyone.

One performance wildly gaining popularity is our annual concert at Boca West, which drew more than 2,000 last year. Another 2,000 attended our free annual Philharmonia concert at Mizner Park, and our annual holiday Gingerbread Concert was as festive as ever. Also, as an incredible treat, our Philharmonia had the opportunity to perform in concert with the legendary von Trapp children. And Jan McArt presents Libby Dodson's Live at Lynn series continues to grow with even more shows than ever this year.

But we feel that being a good neighbor in our community requires even more than concerts and conferences, which is why we would like to set an example by becoming a more environmentally sustainable campus.

We are making sustainability a priority, and so are many students. According to a survey by the College of William and Mary, 13.5 percent of applying college students select a school based on sustainability concerns.

In fact, all of the 65 recycling bins that you see around our campus are there because of a Lynn student – Michael Griffith. Michael's recycling plan was among the winning proposals in the Lynn Innovation Prize competition, and it really does prove that it only takes one person to make a difference in the world.

But we are hoping that more people will step up to make a difference as we finalize our bicycle-friendly commuting program. There will be available bike racks, showers and lockers for those who decide to travel to work on two wheels instead of four.

It is our goal to become a more sustainable campus, but to achieve that goal, we must do it in the way that is right for us. We are looking at the big picture, and we have already made progress. So far, we have undergone a voluntary EPA audit, placed a comprehensive recycling program in our dining hall and have gone paperless in many departments. Lynn University has also joined the City of Boca Raton's Project IRIS, a system that provides reclaimed water for irrigation.

Sustainable solutions such as these and alternative options for energy production are elements that we are considering as we redevelop our campus master plan. And even though our master plan is not due until 2010, we are already immersed in the process and have conducted initial interviews with some of the nation's top master planners.

Today you have heard me talk quite a bit about what we have done and what we will continue to do. But before I end today, please indulge me for a moment to ask something very specific of you – something regarding what you do every day and will do during the year ahead.

At this time last year, I began my State of the University address by discussing my father's early days as president, running off the property surveyors who thought this university would not last. Through the hard work of those who came before us, those days are long behind us. And as you have heard me mention today, we are now in a very healthy financial place with much to be confident of.

That said, I would ask for you to all be stewards – every single person in this room can be a steward. Be caretakers of the resources at your disposal. Exercise ownership over the job that is yours and own your role. Be innovative in your day-to-day activities – see the needs, identify the problems and seek the solutions. We need your ideas, insight and creativity on how to create more value at Lynn and to continue to enhance our university every day and ensure the success of our students.

So today that is my charge to you – help us to continue to find ways to create further value at Lynn and be a caretaker of what we already have. We are an independent institution. We do not depend on anyone but ourselves, and we need all of you. I always refer to us as the Lynn family, and this place is our home, so let's continue to be stewards of our home.

In my first State of the University speech, I said "the cranes will come" but that they wouldn't come until it was prudent. We have been doing – and will continue to do – what is right and justifiable for the mission and vision of our university.

Well, I am happy to say today that the cranes will be here in about a month. And they will be here because we found, in Elaine Wold, a person whose vision complemented our own – and whose generosity is bringing that vision to life with the future Keith C. and Elaine Johnson Wold Performing Arts Center. If you have not yet heard, we will be celebrating the groundbreaking of the 750-seat performing arts center here on our campus on November 19.

Elaine and the entire Wold family are incredible friends of our university. And I am happy to announce today that her gift towards the construction of this center has just grown even more, to an astounding \$9.3 million through an additional \$2.3 million challenge grant.

This challenge grant provides the opportunity for many more of our friends to become involved in this incredible endeavor, and we are now actively seeking donors to help us take advantage of this amazing opportunity set forth by Elaine. Elaine is truly a difference maker in our community, and her grace and generosity will have a tremendous impact on our students.

But our students are not the only ones who will benefit from this incredible center – it will be a gathering place for the entire community, a rich center of culture for everyone in Boca Raton and beyond. Lynn University and Boca Raton grew up together, and we believe that it is important to maintain our strong ties with the community and make this valuable resource available to all.

When people list the world-class cultural venues around South Florida, they include the Kravis Center... the Parker Playhouse... the Broward Center for the Performing Arts... and very soon, the Keith C. and Elaine Johnson Wold Performing Arts Center right here on our campus in Boca Raton.

I also have another major announcement to make regarding the Keith C. and Elaine Johnson Wold Performing Arts Center... that I can hardly wait to tell you about... on November 19. I am sorry, but you will have to come to the groundbreaking to hear this extremely exciting news.

There will also be more exciting news in the days and months ahead, as we celebrate a number of events and enhancements looming on the horizon.

Later in this month, on October 25 during our Parents and Families Weekend, we will be dedicating the newest addition to the Burton D. Morgan School of Aeronautics – a twin-engine, complex aircraft, the Diamond DA-42 Twin Star, generously donated by parents and friends.

And on October 30, we will be celebrating our rich history during our annual Founders Day.

There are also many more things to look forward to farther down the road, like our reaccreditation in 2011. Even though we have time, we are preparing for it now.

This year we welcomed our 46<sup>th</sup> entering class, and they are a very special class. Not only are they the first to experience our new core curriculum in its entirety, but their graduation year coincides with Lynn University's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012.

Our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be an incredible celebration of all that we have achieved throughout our history, but today, I am extremely proud of all that we have accomplished in just the past year and all that we plan to accomplish in the year ahead.

Our focus has always stayed steadfast on progress – and there is no starting point or stopping point in progress. There is just a continuous journey filled with challenges to overcome and achievements to commemorate. And here at Lynn, we are enjoying the journey...

Because right now the state of the university is strong, and each day – through the drive and dedication of our faculty and staff; the confidence and kindness of our friends and neighbors; and the strength and spirit of our students – we are getting stronger.

Thank you all for joining me today, and thank you for your continuous support of our mission, our vision and our university. We would not be Lynn without each and every one of you.