Greetings to CBU and the Memphis Community  
February 10, 2009  
Address to the Board of Trustees, Faculty & Staff, and Media

Thank you Willis, Lance, and members of the Christian Brothers for the confidence you have placed in me and for your warm welcome. Thanks also to members of the CBU and Memphis communities for your welcome. It is an honor to have been selected the first permanent lay president of this wonderful university.

Christian Brothers University has long been the cornerstone for education in Memphis and the Mid-South. As the oldest university in Memphis and the first college in the city to grant a degree, it has long been known for its outstanding academic excellence and commitment to the community. It is my intent as CBU’s first lay President to build upon this foundation and work with industry, educational, community, and religious leaders to utilize CBU’s strengths to positively impact the Memphis economy.

CBU has always and will, under my leadership, continue to provide an educated workforce that meets the immediate needs of the local employers. Our longstanding reputation of educating graduates who are able to quickly enter the workforce will continue; thus, assisting to enhance the economic competitive advantage that Memphis must retain in these financial tough times. In addition, in this environment of greed, steroids, and poverty, the world needs CBU. It is my firm belief that providing this type of talent needed to grow Memphis’ economy is a far better approach than attempting to recruit workers from other regions of the country. In fact, CBU historically recruits 80% of its students from the Memphis Metro area. Subsequently, 80% of CBU graduates take jobs here in the local area and contribute to the Memphis economy.

My vision is for CBU to become the premiere Catholic university in the south, to remain an integral part of the community and to expand its partnerships
with business, education, government and organizations. Our outstanding faculty not only educate within the confines of the classroom but actively engage students with educational opportunities in the community. At CBU, students gain a practical education encompassing a liberal arts core. These partnerships are vital to the overall college education received at CBU and pay huge dividends back to the community.

I am committed to maintaining CBU’s record of graduating students who rank well above the national average of those admitted to medical, pharmacy, and other health professional schools. This fall, CBU opened the Cooper-Wilson Center for Life Sciences and Assisi Hall Science Learning Center which increases the number of students that we can prepare for careers in the medical professions and biosciences. Our intent is for CBU graduates to meet the growing demand for a highly qualified workforce in the medical and biosciences industry that Memphis is aggressively expanding.

Furthermore, I am strongly committed to providing every opportunity for students who are motivated to become teachers and educators, and ultimately to pursue licensure. Did you know that within the first year after completion of the teaching licensure requirements, 95% of CBU prepared candidates are employed in the local and regional public and private schools? I am excited to be joining a university where we are preparing teachers and educators who will ultimately teach the young people of our community who in turn will be the foundation of this workforce.

All economic development must have business leaders who are proactive in new ventures, product development and business practices. CBU understands that the business majors that we graduate today are the business leaders tomorrow. That is why we launched the new CMBA this fall. This program provides a unique educational experience that culminates in the opportunity for each graduate to sit for the certified MBA, a national
certification recognized by all employers. CBU is the only university in the local region offering this exam preparation within their program.

Put simply, you have my promise that CBU will continue to produce a highly educated workforce that will enable Memphis Metro to be a world competitor with a high standard of living. In addition, at CBU, we will continue to embrace the 300 year old Lasallian tradition of excellent teaching, ethical leadership, and service. My wife Eloise, daughters Kristina and Liz, and son Nick are delighted to be here in Memphis! Thank you!