

Lindenwood University

Digital Commons@Lindenwood University

Archived Lindenwood Press Releases

Public Relations

9-20-2006

Text of President Spellmann's Eulogy

Lindenwood University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/press_releases



Part of the [Business and Corporate Communications Commons](#)

LINDENWOOD

Text of President Spellmann's Eulogy

This eulogy was delivered Friday, Sept. 8 at the memorial service of President Dennis C. Spellmann. The eulogy was delivered by Jim J. Shoemaker, chairman of the Lindenwood Board of Directors.

Every generation makes history in its own way. We live it, shape it, and create the future for the generations that follow. It is a noble and honorable task, but seldom do we recognize it at the time.

A headline in the Post-Dispatch on August 31, shouted the fact that "A Visionary is Mourned," and went on to speak to the many notable accomplishments of our late President Dennis Spellmann.

Few individuals have the ability and will to effect change – the kind that will be written about in the history books, and Dennis was one of the few.

If you had the privilege of knowing Dennis Spellmann, as so many of us here did, you knew you were a part of something great, something that would leave the world a better place. He was a man whose reach was immeasurable and who touched countless lives. Yes, a visionary IS being mourned. This campus IS grieving. This community HAS suffered a great loss.

Yet, I cannot help but think that Dennis would not want anyone here today to mourn his passing. He would instead want us to focus on the future for which he had such great hopes and plans.

Those around him knew that Dennis' focus was the success of students at Lindenwood University. While many people might remember him for his aggressive construction and expansion on this campus, his visionary planning or his financial expertise, I think he would wish to be remembered in a more simple fashion: helping students succeed.

Dennis started helping Lindenwood students succeed in March of 1989, when he accepted the challenge to turn Lindenwood around. He did it in a hard-nosed fashion...with a style that is unique and that I doubt will ever be duplicated.

He took Lindenwood "back to its roots." Lindenwood, he felt, had lost its purpose and he went back to the words of Lindenwood's founder Mary Sibley. Lindenwood's purpose, or mission, was to create "enlightened, useful citizens." He re-founded Lindenwood based on those words...and character and good citizenship continue to be a focus here today.

As Chairman of the Board of Directors at Lindenwood, I must tell you that the board deeply appreciates all that Dennis has done here.

There have been a total of 20 presidents at Lindenwood, and Dennis' legacy is already carved out. He has presided over absolutely the most dynamic period in Lindenwood history. And he has done it so very well.

I took time in the last few days to look over some of Dennis' speeches from the past several years. As you might expect, several themes emerge time and time again.

One of the first that caught my attention was a speech he delivered in 2000 to a crowded room at a YMCA banquet. Dennis had been talking proudly about a new building on campus, but I am told by those who were there that at this point he stopped abruptly and said:

“But that is not what we are about—bricks and mortar. We are about people. We are about people with character and values. People who want to work hard and succeed...and move on to a meaningful and productive life..”

Dennis told the group that the nation’s colleges and universities did a marvelous job rewarding top athletes and scholars. But, he said, “What about character? Doesn’t it count? What about community service?”

Recognizing character and community service, these are some of the components of the Million Dollar Character Scholarship Program that Dennis created seven years ago, and which has touched the lives of hundreds of students.

In late 2001, he provided strong leadership at an important time—as colleges all across the country dealt with bizarre student behavior after September 11. He told the Lindenwood faculty that there was no way he would consider closing school, as some had recommended. Dennis believed the students needed something to hold onto...some stability...amid the turmoil.

He was a steadfast captain, setting a certain and meticulous course through stormy weather and past dangerous shoals. He set the course, but also manned the wheel. He was a visionary, but also a native Texan, always ready with practical advice.

Year after year at the opening convocation, he urged students to follow his tried and true tips for success:

--understand why you are in college and focus on it --set up a daily schedule --get involved --respect the rights of others --develop friendships that will enhance your personal goals --commit to a full day of study

Dennis told students, “Ultimately, the responsibility for getting a quality education is yours. Our commitment to you is wasted if it is not met with an equal commitment by you.”

This leads me to the faculty. Dennis Spellmann was very proud of his faculty. He often spoke of having the best faculty in the nation. Oh, he asked them to work hard, but he was proud of their work.

His faculty was so important to him that on August 21...just nine days before he passed away, he dismissed the pain and dismissed a sleepless night to MAKE SURE he started the academic year off with his “State of the University” address to the faculty. He talked at length about what he hoped to accomplish over the next three years.

That was his last “public” appearance on this campus, and he received two standing ovations from HIS faculty.

The last thing I want to mention is Lindenwood’s philosophy and mission. Everything that Lindenwood is and does flows from its mission statement. Dennis saw to that. He worked in consultation with the alumni, faculty, staff and board to revise the university’s mission statement in 1999 to better express our traditional values here...in the context of today’s global community.

This past year, Dennis spent a great deal of time with now Acting President Jim Evans, the Board’s Mission and Purpose Committee and the faculty in the creation of a mission-based document called “The Lindenwood Way.”

“The Lindenwood Way” embodies Dennis’ philosophy of education and expresses how our university distinguishes itself from most other institutions of higher education.

The Lindenwood Way places emphasis on: being a Teaching University... the strong role of the faculty... a cohesive curriculum built on a foundation of general education the university's management style and on the Pioneering "frontier" nature of Lindenwood.

"The Lindenwood Way" began in 1827. Each of our 20 presidents has had a role in its development, but none I venture to say has impacted it more greatly than has Dennis Spellmann.

Dennis was Lindenwood's architect. He brought it back to health. He took it to new heights. He and the faculty and staff have given it a strength and vitality that will live on...and benefit students for years to come.

Remember ---- Dennis Spellmann would not want you to mourn today...or any other day. He would want you to do your best and to help Lindenwood continue to Make a Difference and Change Lives – because "it's The Lindenwood Way.

Press Release Contact:

Public Relations
Lindenwood University
publicRelations@lindenwood.edu

© 1827-2013 Lindenwood University • 209 S. Kingshighway • St. Charles, MO 63301

Switchboard (636) 949-2000
Undergraduate Admissions (636) 949-4949
Evening & Graduate Admissions (636) 949-4933