The Beauty of a University
There are few earthly things more splendid than a university.
Among its many distinctive strengths, the University of Pittsburgh Press long has played an important role in giving early exposure to poets who have later achieved great stature. To give just a few very recent examples:

- one of the first English translations of the works of the Swedish poet Tomas Tranströmer, who won the 2011 Nobel Prize in Literature, was published by the University of Pittsburgh Press;

- both the first and most recent works of Richard Blanco, the inaugural poet for President Obama’s second inauguration, were published by our Press; and

- the first works of Sharon Olds, who was awarded the 2013 Pulitzer Prize in Poetry and returned to Pitt to read last spring, were published here.

We also have nurtured great talent within our own student body and faculty. This fall, to give one important example that bridges these two groups, Terrance Hayes (A&S ’97G), who earned his graduate degree here and won the 2010 National Book Award for Poetry, returned from the Carnegie Mellon University faculty to join ours.
But I want to begin my remarks today by reading from John Masefield, a poet who, as far as I know, had no connection to Pitt. He was Britain’s poet laureate from 1930 until 1967 and wrote this poem for the 1946 inauguration of the Chancellor of the University of Sheffield in the aftermath of World War II.

There are few earthly things more splendid than a university. In these days of broken frontiers and collapsing values, when every future looks somewhat grim and the dams are down and the floods are making misery, when every ancient foothold has become something of a quagmire, wherever a university stands, it stands and shines; wherever it exists, the free minds of men, urged on to full and fair enquiry, may still bring wisdom into human affairs.

There are few earthly things more beautiful than a university. It is a place where those who hate ignorance may strive to know,
where those who perceive truth may strive to make others see;  
where seekers and learners alike,  
banded together in the search for knowledge,  
will honor thought in all its finer ways,  
will welcome thinkers in distress or in exile,  
will uphold ever the dignity of thought and learning,  
and will exact standards in these things.  
They give to the young in their impressionable years,  
the bond of a lofty purpose shared,  
of a great corporate life whose links will not be loosed until they die.  

They give young people that close companionship for which youth longs,  
and that chance of the endless discussion of the themes which are endless,  
without which youth would seem a waste of time.  

There are few things more enduring than a university.  
Religions may split into sect or heresy;  
dynasties may perish or be supplanted,  
but for century after century the university will continue,  
and the stream of life will pass through it,  
and the thinker and the seeker will be bound together  
in the undying cause of bringing thought into the world.  
To be a member of these great societies  
must ever be a glad distinction.  

—By John Masefield (Britain’s Poet Laureate 1930-1967)

As we celebrated Pitt’s 225th anniversary, many of us were struck in an even more pronounced way by the enduring nature of our own University with a proud history that already has spanned two complete centuries and parts of two others. Over that time, a school born on the frontier has endured floods and fires, the Civil War, two world wars, the Great Depression, and many other challenges to become a major force for good as a leading 21st-century research university.

And in a very real sense, though we might not have expressed the thought so artfully, we really have been celebrating the “stream of life” that has passed through Pitt over the course of those now more than 226 years. And through our efforts, that rich flow continues.
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when every future looks somewhat grim and the dams are down and the floods are making misery,
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The Beauty of a University

Last month, on the second anniversary of her death, we dedicated a memorial garden on the Cathedral of Learning lawn to Wangari Maathai (A&S ’65G). A Pitt graduate, she was awarded the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize for her work as the founder of Africa’s Green Belt Movement and as a champion of women’s rights, democracy, and sustainability in her native Kenya.

That garden itself is a thing of physical beauty and extends our efforts to make all five of our campuses as humanly appealing as we can. Our recent efforts, limited to just the historic center of this campus, include:

- the planting and tending of other gardens;
- the creation, in partnership with others, of a new park where an ugly surface parking lot had stood;
- the reopening of the grand entrance to the Hillman Library;
- the remodeling of the Stephen Foster Memorial to include the Charity Randall and Henry Heymann Theatres, places of beauty where performances of beauty are presented;
- the replacement of our historic student leadership walk, which includes the names of Trustees Mike Bryson (A&S ’68) and Brent Saunders (A&S ’92) and Emeritus Trustee Ruggero Aldisert (A&S ’41, LAW ’47);
- the cleaning and repair of what had become the Cathedral’s somewhat dingy and damaged exterior;
- the illumination of the spectacular stained glass windows in the Heinz Memorial Chapel; and
- the placement of attractive signs of substance proclaiming that this is Pitt and that we have been doing our good work for a long, long time.

That is a lot of beautification activity in a compressed geographic space in a rather constrained period of time. And, as you know, further examples can be found on our other four campuses as well as in other corners of Oakland.
But there also is a different kind of beauty, tied to our institutional mission, that is revealed in the inspiring example of Wangari Maathai. She was born in the central highlands of Kenya and educated in that country through high school before coming to America as a part of the “Africa Airlift” program in 1960. Her initial destination was Mount St. Scholastica College in Kansas, where she earned her undergraduate degree.

Her first trip to Pittsburgh came in the summer of 1963, when she still was an undergraduate but received a scholarship to attend a six-week leadership course at Pitt. That experience must have been a good one, because she came back the following year to pursue graduate work in the biological sciences. She returned to Kenya after earning her master’s degree, so her time in Pittsburgh was short, less than two years. However, by her own account, the impact of her time here was tremendous.

- During her six-week undergraduate summer course in leadership at Pitt, she wrote a paper on “helping women in rural areas work together and promote development efforts.” “Little did I know,” she wrote in her memoir, “that I would be putting that theory into practice only a decade later, when I would be inspired by rural women to initiate the Green Belt Movement.”

- Pittsburgh also gave her new perspectives on the environmental issues that became so central to her life. As she put it, “In the mid-1960s, Pittsburgh, like other manufacturing towns in the United States, was coming to terms with a legacy of pollution from...
a hundred years of the industrial revolution. This turned out to be my first experience of environmental restoration, because the city was already working to clean up its air. ... Today, Pittsburgh no longer is shrouded in smoke, but is one of the most beautiful metropolises in the land.”

- She further reported that the lab skills that she had developed at Pitt “proved pivotal less than two years later in Kenya.” Without those skills, she never would have secured a position as a research assistant in a Kenyan university lab. And without that first position, she would not have become the first woman to hold the rank of associate professor and to serve as a department chair in that part of Africa. And without her academic platform, the rest of her important work might never have been done.

- Speaking more broadly about this country, she said, “It is fair to say that America transformed me: It made me into the person I am today. It taught me not to waste any opportunity and to do what can be done—and that there is a lot to do. The spirit of freedom and possibility that America nurtured in me made me want to foster the same in Kenya, and it was in this spirit that I returned home.”

This brief biography of this very distinguished graduate underscores the wisdom of the words written by Henry Adams more than a century ago: “A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.” But even if precise predictions of the achievements and impact of particular graduates cannot be made, we know another truth, one that has guided our efforts and is supported by the resulting record here at Pitt: If we give all of our students the chance to be the best that they can be, some of them will become the best that anyone can be.

When Professor Maathai returned to this campus in 2006, having won what many consider to be the highest human honor, she said, “I feel as though I am back home. I am deeply grateful for the gift that this institution gave to me. I felt I was prepared to go forth, ready to serve the world.” She stands as a stunning example of what Masefield would call our University’s “stream of life.”
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The Stream of Life Passing Through It—the Learners

During the early weeks of each academic year, we are regularly reminded of other dimensions of the Masefield description of the human dimensions of a university—the giving to the young of “a lofty purpose shared”; “that close companionship” for which they long; and “that chance of the endless discussion of the themes which are endless, without which youth would seem a waste of time.” Homecoming—when graduates return to reconnect with each other and with their alma mater—provides visible evidence of Masefield’s great and unified life, “whose links will not be loosed until they die.” And all of this, of course, does depend upon the strength of the “stream of life” passing through the University.

On the student side, we acquire some sense of the strength of that stream when we assist in Arrival Survival, or attend Freshman Convocation or Lantern Night, or participate in any of a range of other activities. And knowing that you always like to receive these statistics, let me report that this year, 616 Arrival Survival volunteers devoted 8,204 hours to help move 7,568 students into 20 residence halls on this campus. In that process, 19,716 ice cream treats, 13,000 bottles of water, 7,932 cups of coffee, 6,240 cans of soda, 4,000 slices of pizza, and 4,728 doughnuts were consumed.

The health-conscious among you will be relieved when I report that we measure the strength of our stream of life through somewhat different numbers, and as you already know, we just enrolled the biggest and best-qualified freshman class in our history. To put that in context, in 1995, we received 7,825 applications for admission to the undergraduate programs on this campus. By the fall of 2012, that number had climbed to 24,871. And by this fall, those numbers had taken another very big jump, to 27,634.
Average test scores also soared, from 1110 in 1995 to 1293 this fall. And we have not become more selective by shrinking the size of the student body. Instead, the size of the Pittsburgh campus freshman class grew from 2,424 in 1995 to 3,922 this fall, an increase of more than 62 percent. And if you want to know what these talented students are doing with at least some of their time, consider a recent *Pitt Chronicle* headline announcing round-the-clock hours for the Hillman Library.

The news gets even better. At the end of last week—just the fifth week of our annual admissions cycle—we had received 12,584 applications seeking admission to the undergraduate programs on this campus for next fall. At the same point last year—which, again, was our record-breaking year—we had received 7,054 applications, so we are up more than 5,500 applications or over 78 percent. Despite Pennsylvania’s challenging demographics, we are up more than 60 percent in applications from in-state students and are up more than 125 percent in applications from out-of-state students. And the quality of that growing pool also continues to rise, because applicants know that admissions here are highly competitive. Average test scores are up 11 points, and the percentage of applicants in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating classes is up 2 percent.

What draws these hardworking, high-achieving students is the quality of the experiences associated with today’s Pitt—in and outside the classroom, on campus and in the broader community. And we continue to deliver in ways that prompt expressions of appreciation. To give just three recent examples,

- **About a month after their arrival, I spent an evening with freshmen living in Nordenberg Hall when they invited me to come and speak about leadership. I do not know how any group could have been more excited about their first weeks on a campus.**

- **Last week, Nikki and I hosted our annual dinner for student leaders, who tend to be juniors and seniors. Again, I do not know where you could find a happier, more impressive, or kinder group of students. Showing both generosity and their academic bent, they surprised me by each bringing the gift of a book—to be read, I presume, when my vocational responsibilities are less demanding—accompanied by a personal, hand-written note of thanks for their Pitt experiences.**
Completing the continuum—from freshmen to upperclass students to recent graduates—when I attended our football game against Duke, I found myself seated in the stands near large numbers of young alumni. At halftime and other breaks in the action (though in a 58–55 game, there were few other breaks in the action), they came over in large numbers to tell me about what they were doing and to express gratitude for the Pitt experiences that had made this next stage of their lives possible.

These are striking examples of what our Middle States Commission on Higher Education accreditation team had described as “an ethos of appreciation which evokes humility in those of us who come to observe it.”

And our students also are people who already understand that the more fortunate have a special responsibility to give back. For example, 4,500 of our current students are signed up for a Saturday of community service through Pitt Make A Difference Day, which will come at the end of this month. Ironically, there are only enough projects for 4,000 students, so the extra 500 are on a waiting list.
The quality of our “stream of life”—as it relates to students and to other missions, particularly research—is dependent on the strength of our faculty and staff. Given ongoing financial challenges, there have been no increases to our employment base in recent years. In fact, as you know, when economic pressures persisted, we implemented a voluntary early retirement plan and lost 352 experienced employees. But we do continue to recruit talented people who choose to advance their ambitious agendas here.

Within the faculty, as you might expect, most of our appointments are made at the junior level. However, each year, we also are able to recruit some outstanding senior colleagues with existing records of achievement. I already have mentioned Terrance Hayes, the National Book Award-winning poet, who has moved from the Carnegie Mellon faculty to our Department of English. Let me add just a few other examples, showing the range of those senior appointments:

- Geri Allen (A&S ’83G), a renowned pianist and composer, was recruited from the faculty of the University of Michigan to join our Department of Music and to serve as director of our Jazz Studies Program.
- Alexander Deiters was recruited as a full professor to our Department of Chemistry from the faculty at North Carolina State University. While there, he built a record as a highly creative and prolific researcher in the areas of synthetic chemistry and chemical biology, with much of his work tied to the discovery of new therapeutics targeting cancer and other diseases.
- H. Richard Milner IV was recruited to our School of Education to hold the Helen S. Faison Chair in Urban Education (named after our distinguished emeritus trustee) and to serve as director of our Center for Urban Education. He had held the Lois Betts Professorship in Education and Human Development and was the
founding director of the Learning, Diversity, and Urban Studies Master’s Program in the Peabody School of Education and Human Development at Vanderbilt University.

- And Mark Shlomchik was recruited to serve as chair of the Department of Immunology in our School of Medicine. He had been a member of the faculty at Yale University for 20 years, where he developed an outstanding reputation for his contributions to our understanding of autoimmune diseases, particularly lupus.

These new colleagues will join a high-achieving faculty that continues to attract enviable levels of support, produce work of real impact, and earn the highest forms of national and international recognition. Let me give just two examples from recent weeks:

- A McGowan Institute for Regenerative Medicine team, led by Professor Rocky Tuan, director of our Center for Military Medicine Research, will codirect the $75 million second phase of an Armed Forces Institute of Regenerative Medicine national initiative to aid wounded warriors.

- And a Pitt-Harvard-Illinois team led by Anna Balazs, the Distinguished Professor of Chemical Engineering and Robert v.d. Luft Professor in our Swanson School of Engineering, has received a grant from the U.S. Army Research Office to develop 4D materials that can reprogram their shape, properties, or functionality in response to external stimuli.

I spent some time in labs at the Swanson School last summer, trying to acquire a better sense of 3D printing. I am not sure how I will make the move up to 4D.
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**Enduring for Century after Century**

Pitt’s 226-year history is consistent with the Masefield statements that “[t]here are few things more enduring than a university” and that “for century after century the university will continue.” Dramatic reductions in public support for higher education, while not threatening our existence, have sometimes led us to consider the form in which we might continue to exist. And that loss of public support has made private philanthropy more important than ever, underscoring the historic significance of last year’s successful completion of our $2 billion fundraising campaign.

Most investments of any kind are made in the hope that they will produce growth over time. But the opportunities for growth triggered by investments in the people or programs or facilities of a university like ours are extraordinary. Let me talk briefly about two gifts made more than a decade before our recent campaign to convey some sense of their enormous impact over a somewhat more extended period of time.

In 1984, the Richard King Mellon Foundation made a three-year, $3 million seed grant to establish the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute (UPCI). Five years later, the UPCI was designated a Comprehensive Cancer Center by the National Cancer Institute—the fastest that coveted designation had ever been earned by any new cancer center.

Since then, as we all know, the Cancer Institute has benefited enormously from the generosity of many other donors. Most obvious, of course, is the extraordinary support that has been provided by Henry and Elsie Hillman and the Hillman Foundation to create the UPMC Hillman Cancer Center and the Hillman Fellows Program for Innovative Cancer Research, among other things. Those gifts, combined with large investments by UPMC, took our efforts to combat cancer to an entirely new level. And other community leaders—individuals, foundations, and corporations—followed suit, as did Pitt’s students, with
fraternities and sororities raising more than $500,000 to support UPCI-based lung cancer research.

What have these investments produced? The UPCI today is home to more than 350 research and clinical faculty members who have attracted more than $950 million in federal research support since UPCI’s founding. What also has been built is one of the world’s leading centers for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer and for all forms of cancer-related research; an international exporter of cancer diagnosis and treatment know-how; a transforming force in terms of the reputation of the region; and a powerful engine for economic growth.

A few years after the Richard King Mellon Foundation made its grant to create the UPCI, Trustee Dick Simmons made a $1 million gift to endow the R.P. Simmons Scholarship Fund. Its purpose is to award scholarships to children of employees of Allegheny Ludlum or high school graduates from the Highlands, Leechburg, Freeport, Valley High School in New Kensington, Kiski Area, Burrell, Apollo, Ford City, Kittanning, Springdale, and Deer Lakes School Districts, as well as the St. Joseph High School in Natrona.

In the quarter century since that fund was created, 467 students have received scholarships from it. Past recipients have become accountants, audiologists, auditors, dentists, engineers, executives, financial professionals, lawyers, nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, physicians, professors, speech pathologists, teachers, technologists, and toxicologists. Their employers include such familiar names as Alcoa, Allegheny Energy, American Eagle, Bank of America, Bayer, Bechtel, BNY Mellon, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Carnegie Mellon, Curtiss-Wright, CVS, Deloitte, Dick’s Sporting Goods, EQT, Federated Investors, FedEx Ground, FirstEnergy, Highmark, Kimberly-Clark, the Mayo Clinic, MEDRAD, the National Institutes of Health, Northrop Grumman, PennDOT, Pitt Ohio Express, PNC, PPG, Prudential, Reed Smith, Robert Morris, Sherwin-Williams, UPMC, U.S. Steel, and the University of Pittsburgh.

The positive impact that these Simmons scholars must have had, traveling the life paths that they have chosen, through their work and in their home communities, is incalculable. And based on just this information, each of us almost certainly would conclude that, through its positive impact in helping to shape nearly 500 productive lives, with still more to come, an extraordinary return is being generated on Dick’s wonderful and well-targeted investment.
Of course, few people have the means to invest either $1 million or $3 million in any cause, no matter how worthy it may be—though 293 donors did make gifts of $1 million or more to our recently concluded campaign. But the proportionate returns on smaller gifts can be every bit as rewarding—which is why more than 188,000 donors contributed to that $2 billion campaign. And the collective good to be produced by that $2 billion over time, though not precisely predictable, is boundless.

As is described more fully in the distributed campaign report, the funds raised helped to pay for both new construction and renovations; helped to launch exciting new initiatives; led to the naming of two key schools, the Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences and the Swanson School of Engineering; endowed three deanships—the Bettye J. and Ralph E. Bailey Dean of Arts and Sciences, the U.S. Steel Dean of Engineering, and the Lerner Dean of the University Honors College—as well as the Hillman University Librarian; endowed 154 chairs and professorships; and, advancing our highest priority and following the lead of Dick Simmons, endowed more than 600 new scholarship and fellowship funds. What a huge difference this is going to make!

Most obviously, the success of this campaign is the direct product of the generosity of our donors. Its success also was fueled by a committed army of volunteers and driven by skilled and determined leadership.

For the first half of the campaign, leadership was provided by triple Pitt graduate and then U.S. Steel CEO Tom Usher (ENGR ’64, ’66G, ’71G). We remain deeply grateful to Tom for all that he has done for Pitt, and we formally thanked him for his efforts as campaign chair after the $1 billion goal had been reached.

At that same time, as we doubled our goal to $2 billion, we also decided to double up on campaign leadership, recruiting what almost certainly is the first sister-brother team to lead a university campaign of this size. That sibling super-team, consisting of Trustee Burt Tansky (A&S ’61), former president and CEO of the Neiman Marcus Group, and Board Vice Chair Eva Tansky Blum (A&S ’70, LAW ’73), PNC Bank, N.A., executive vice president and director, Community Affairs, and chair and president of the PNC Foundation, led us past the $2 billion mark, which was historic not only for Pitt but for this region—the largest amount ever raised by any organization for any purpose at any time in Western Pennsylvania.
When we announced that we had met that very big goal, the news was instantly reported, as we all would expect, on the Web site of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. The Post-Gazette's quality control professionals almost immediately noticed that there was something wrong with their first electronic headline and quickly corrected it. But the crack team in my office caught that headline, copied that headline, and kept that headline in its original form. Here it is:

**Pitt Reaches $2 Billion Funraising Goal.**

Of course, the writer meant to say “fundraising” and not “funraising,” and the headline was quickly changed. However, with Eva and Burt at the lead, either term really is an accurate description of what we did. From beginning to end, they set an upbeat tone of team togetherness, which meant that we had a lot of fun and made a lot of friends while raising a lot of funds.

It also is true that we could not have been successful without strong professional leadership. Many people—other fundraisers, members of my senior team, and members of the Council of Deans, for example—made very significant contributions. Right at the top of that professional team, though, were two very capable, deeply committed, and highly collaborative individuals: Clyde Jones, the President of our Medical and Health Sciences Foundation and Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences Development, and Al Novak, Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement.

In an area in which collaborating can be a real challenge because everyone is seeking to claim the highest potential prospects for himself, Al and Clyde became great partners, and their ability to not only work together but to support each other became a model for others within the University.

As I said when we publicly launched our campaign at Carnegie Music Hall on Discovery Weekend, the amount of money that we have raised, as impressive as that figure obviously is, is less important than what we do with that money. And as you all know, there has been a very nice mesh between the purposes for which funds were given and our institutional needs and priorities. In fact, we already can see the impact of the campaign throughout our five campuses.
But, particularly for a stubborn group like this one, there is another reason that this campaign success was so important: because others said we could not do it, that we could not raise $500 million, much less $2 billion. So, we rose to meet that challenge, with the Board of Trustees as the driver! Like some of you, I have clear memories of the Board retreat at which we were being advised to slow down, and the Board, led by then Chair J.W. Connolly, said that we could not afford to wait and should just get going.

Back then, Pitt was more broadly viewed as a place that could not get big things done. In a sense, then, “getting going,” as a more general matter, was about the most important thing we could do. And what have we done since then?

- We have increased undergraduate applications by three and one-half times; raised average SAT scores by nearly 200 points; increased FTE enrollment by more than 20 percent and regularly produced happy, high-performing students at all levels.

- We climbed into the top five American universities in federal research support, and having imported more than $9 billion of research support into the local economy since 1995, we added 3,700 employees, an increase of more than 38 percent.

- We invested more than $1 billion to add 3.6 million additional gross square feet of facilities space, the construction of which also added significantly to the region’s economic activity.

- We nearly quadrupled our net assets, from under $1 billion to $3.8 billion, and increased our endowment six and one-half times, from $463 million to just over $3 billion.

And we raised more than $2 billion in private support, with over half of that large sum coming from outside this region. In the process, we demonstrated that in fundraising, too, Pitt is a force, an institution that does, in fact, get a lot of good things done—a message that is important both internally and externally.
Every year at Freshman Convocation, as well as on other occasions, I tell our students that we want their years here to be great years but that we do not want their Pitt years to be the best years of their lives. Instead, we want their Pitt years to be a time when they use the power of higher education to build the foundation for lives in which each year is better, in some meaningful way, than the ones that preceded it.

Much the same can be said about our own efforts. We have been working hard to ensure that our chapter in Pitt’s long and proud history is one of its best. But our longer-term goal, consistent with Masefield’s reminder about the enduring nature of a university, has been to position Pitt so that even better years are within its grasp. In that sense, both our strong foundation and our still-accelerating momentum are keys to a promising future.

Thanks for all that you have done to build both. And, as our current students have come to express it, “H2P” or “Hail to Pitt.”
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