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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Considering Our Legacy: Doing Work that Really Matters

Jeffrey F. Milem

I would like to extend my special thanks to the local elders and the group of First Nations and indigenous scholars who came together to plan this wonderful opening event for us. I especially want to thank Sandy Grande who first approached me late last spring about the idea of our working together to have indigenous and First Nations people play a bigger role in ASHE. I hope that this is the start of a long and fruitful collaboration. This is indeed a wonderful way to begin our 34th annual meeting.

I fervently thank Karen Kurotsuchi Inkelas, conference program chair, and Kim Nehls, Executive Director of ASHE, for all of the work that they have done to make this conference happen. I remember that, when Estela Bensimon called me to tell me that I had been elected president of ASHE, her words of wisdom to me were that the most important decision I would make as president was who my program chair would be. If my choice of chair is any indicator of my success as president, then I have done an amazing job. Thanks to Karen for the incredible job she has done in planning this conference. This has been an especially challenging year for our organization with the move from Michigan State University to the University of Nevada—Las

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DEDICATION: To the memory of my younger, big brother, Eric Dey.

Vegas and the hiring of a new executive director. I really don't know how we would have made it through if Kim had not been there.

Let me also thank my friend and colleague, Dr. Michelle Asha Cooper, who stepped in at the very last minute and agreed to introduce me after Sharon Fries Britt was unable to attend the conference. I have known Michelle for a very long time, and I am in continued awe of her grace, her intellect, and her passion for her work. You know, hearing yourself introduced at a gathering like this in a way is sort of like eavesdropping on your own eulogy.

As I was trying to focus on what I wanted my message to be today, given the daunting challenges that confront higher education institutions, and especially public higher education institutions, I remembered a short essay by Woody Allen (1980) that I read nearly 30 years ago. At that time, he had not given a graduation speech to anyone, and I'm unsure if he has yet today; but that essay is what he imagined he would say if he were asked to give a commencement speech. Allen wrote, "More than at any other time in history, mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other, to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly." While there is great humor in these words, I fear that there is an element of truth in them as well if we apply them to the current state of higher education and the scholars who study it.

Those who know me know that I like good quotations, and this afternoon I'll manage to throw a few into my remarks. Those who know me well know that there is one quotation in particular that I am fond of using when I am asked to speak. And those who know me *really* well tease me about my fondness for it. Initially attributed to Sir Isaac Newton, but later adapted by activists in the civil rights movement, it says: "If we are able to see clearer, it is because we stand on the shoulders of the giants who came before us." I'm not sure why people tease me about my fondness for this quotation, because it really is a good one, isn't it? Unquestionably, much of who I am and what I see is because of the giants on whose shoulders I stand.

As we consider those giants who came before us, I think it is appropriate to remember our colleagues who have passed but who made such important contributions to our field: Burton Clark, Eric Dey, Len Foster, Barbara Townsend, and Ron Takaki, among others. We will have a memorial breakfast tomorrow morning at 7:00 for those of you who would like to join us in remembering our dear colleagues.

I would like to take a minute to thank the many mentors who have guided me throughout my professional life. As many of you know, I did my doctoral work at UCLA. While there, I was able to study with some of the greatest scholars in the country who studied higher education. Moreover, a defining attribute of these mentor/teachers was the fact that they worked diligently to insure that their work would make a difference.

Organizational literature talks about the existence of “hot groups,” meaning, essentially, that in the right place, at the right time, under the right conditions, the planets align themselves in a way that allows the right group of people to come together to achieve grand things. I was blessed to have been part of one of these groups during my time as a graduate student at UCLA and have spent most of my professional career working to establish the conditions that will re-create groups like these wherever it is that I am working. Forty years ago, Art Chickering (1969) wrote that a student’s most important teacher is another student; and based upon my experience with this great group of colleagues, I’d have to say that I agree.

A number of my senior peers have reached out to me over the years in one way or another and have enriched my professional and personal life. I really like using the term “senior” because, as I get older, I find that the frequency with which I get to refer to someone as a senior colleague gets rarer and rarer.

I’d like to thank my ever-expanding group of peers, colleagues, and collaborators. I continue to do this work in large part because I get to do it with you.

I especially want to give a shout-out to my current and former students who have taught me (and continue to teach me) a heck of a lot more than I have been able to teach them.

I have saved recognition of my most important mentor/teachers for last: my maternal grandparents, Millard Fillmore Layne and Myrtie Depriest Layne; my paternal grandparents, Raymond Arlene Milem and Dora White Milem; my aunts, uncles, and cousins who helped to raise me when I was very young; my father, Paul Milem, a Navy veteran of the Korean War who was able to attend college because of the G.I. Bill and was the first in his family to graduate from college; and my mother, Margaret Layne Milem, who has had a profound influence on my life because of the life that she modeled for me.

My mother lived and modeled a life of social justice long before I ever knew what that meant. My mom attended a two-year nursing school where she paid for her studies by working in the hospital where the nursing school was located when she wasn’t attending classes. As I was growing up, she often told me that she hoped I would be one of two things when I grew up—either a preacher, because the church was so important to her, or a doctor. I like to say that I honored my mom by splitting the difference. I am a doctor, although not the kind that mom wanted me to be (you’ve seen the old New Yorker cartoon where the maître de in the restaurant is on the phone and says, “Yes, Dr. Smith, a table for two. Now would that be a real doctor or merely a Ph.D.?”), and my former students in the room can attest to the fact that I have a tendency to preach from time to time.

Finally, I can't tell you how happy I am that my two most important teachers, mentors, and supporters are here today—my spouse, Rose, and our son, Alfredo. Thank you. I don't tell you enough how much you have enriched my life. I would never have achieved what I have nor would I be the person that I am if you weren't a part of my life.

What Fredo didn't know when he agreed to join us in Vancouver was that I was going to incorporate a story into my remarks today about a talk that I tried to have with him when he was much younger. Rose and I knew how tough it was for Alfredo to be one of the few Mexican kids in his school in Irvine, California. He felt an awful lot of pressure to fit in. Rose and I noticed that there were times when, as any kid does from time to time, he tried a little too hard to fit. On one of those occasions, I was trying to find a way to get him to worry less about what others thought about him and to think more about who he was, why he should be very proud of that, and, ultimately, to think about the type of person he wanted to be. As part of the conversation, I asked Alfredo to think about what he wanted his legacy to be—to think about how he wanted to be remembered when all was said and done. Now, this could be a potentially fruitful conversation, if I had it with him today, since he is 30 years old, but it didn't work all that well when he was 10. Chalk it up as yet another example of how the academic side of me has a tendency to over-think a situation. As I thought about what I wanted to say in this speech, I found that I was asking myself what my legacy would be, but, more importantly, I found myself asking the same question about our organization.

In preparing for my talk, I did what most scholars do as part of their process: I did a literature review. It's a great way to postpone the actual writing of any text. I went back and read about a dozen of the previous ASHE presidential addresses to see what my predecessors had said was important for us to consider as a community of scholars. They are some of the giants on whose shoulders we all stand. I started with Pat Terenzini's speech in 1996 because it is the first one that I remember really thinking about after I heard it, and I ended with Linda Eisenmann's speech just last year. As I read these talks, I found that many of the things that I wanted to say weren't all that new. In fact, some common themes emerged that are relevant to my talk today.

Several of my predecessors—Pat Terenzini (1996), Gary Rhoades (2006), Linda Johnsrud (2008), Linda Eisenmann (2009), and Sylvia Hurtado (2007)—implored us to do more work that is policy relevant. Sylvia extended this theme to argue that we must do research that advances the role of higher education in promoting social progress.

Laura Rendón (2000) encouraged us to find connectedness and to seek understanding in our work. She reminded us how important it is that we view academic research as a relationship-centered process.

Several of our colleagues described the important obligations that we have as public intellectuals. Linda Johnsrud (2008) asked us to think about what legacy we wanted to leave; and Bill Tierney (2003) reminded us that, as faculty members, we enjoy great privileges, but that we also have great responsibilities.

Ann Austin talked with us about the important role that we play in preparing future faculty and the important leadership that we should provide to our colleagues in developing new members of our profession.

Finally, Linda Eisenmann, Pat Terenzini, and Estela Bensimon (2007) talked about the many important roles we should play in developing educational practice and educational practitioners. Pat reminded us that education is and should remain an applied field that uses various disciplinary lenses to address real educational issues and problems. Estela talked to us about how we should develop a praxis approach in our scholarship and teaching in which the practitioner becomes researcher and the researcher becomes facilitator.

What can we do to insure that our work really matters, to enhance the chances that it will make a difference, to insure that our legacy as teachers, mentors, scholars, policymakers, and practitioners is one of which we can be proud? It seems to me that there are least two ways in which we can do this. First, we need to conduct and transmit the findings of scholarship that are used to inform and improve educational and social policy at the local, state, national, and international levels. Second, we need to conduct and communicate the findings of scholarship that are used to inform and improve educational practice in our own communities, in our own institutions, in the places where we work and live.

So, why is it that the themes raised by previous ASHE presidents emerge again in subsequent speeches? Why have we failed to achieve the goals that they have set for us as scholars of higher education?

I think that there has been a general failure of individual faculty members to engage their own institutions in their work or to carry out policy-relevant research. I think that this happens for a number of reasons.

First, I think that too many of our junior faculty have come to view tenure as *the* goal, instead of as a reward or as a privilege that we earn, one that comes after we successfully achieve a number of very important professional goals. I think that those of us who are senior scholars have played a significant role in helping to create this problem because we do not mentor our students and our junior colleagues well enough. Because of this preoccupation with getting tenure, too many of us are overly concerned with cranking out publications and publishing them in the right places rather than working to create a program of sustained scholarship that will be of high quality and that will really matter.

Second, as scholars—and I think that this is especially true for developing scholars—many of us think that we face an insurmountable challenge in finding a balance between doing work that is relevant and doing work that is intellectually challenging. Embedded in this idea is the belief that work that addresses “real” problems cannot be intellectually sound or stimulating. This misconception must be dismissed.

There are also times when we are concerned—and rightfully so, I think—that the work we do at the institutional level or in the policy domain will be co-opted by the administrators or policymakers with whom we are working.

Moreover, it is hard for many of us to develop professional identities that challenge the status quo within organizations of which we are constituents. In this vein, I think that it is important to heed the call of our colleague, Mitchell Chang (2002), who has written eloquently about the need to shift the discourse in our institutions of higher education from one of preservation to one of transformation. The discourse of preservation focuses on maintaining the status quo. In contrast, transformative discourse challenges the “business as usual” attitude on our campuses and raises some critically important questions that must be asked and answered. These include: Who deserves an opportunity to learn? How is the potential for learning evaluated? What is learned? Who oversees learning? What conditions advance learning for all students? Who decides what is important to learn?

Finally, it requires a great deal of time and energy to develop the relationships and understandings that are necessary to do work that informs policy and institutional practice. However, we must heed Laura Rendón’s (2000) call to understand that academic research is a relationship-centered process and to do the work that allows us to develop and nurture these relationships. This is especially true if we want to do work that is in our own backyards or work that can be used to inform and improve educational policy.

Two institutional impediments get in the way of doing this work. First among these is the fact that many administrators are hesitant to ask questions to which they do not already know the answer or for which they cannot control the answer. In the institutionally focused work that I do, I always make sure that the administrators with whom I am working agree to a key condition before we move forward. They must be as willing to learn what we/they aren’t doing well as they are to learn what they *are* doing well because, as we move forward with our work, we are certain to experience both.

Second, it is very difficult to institutionalize activities and initiatives designed to inform and improve educational policy and practice because they are something new and usually rely heavily on the people who come together to create them for their success. In difficult budget times, or when key members of the collaborative leave, the work is often in jeopardy.

In the spirit of Mitch's challenge to us to find ways to stimulate transformative discourse, I'd like to talk briefly with you about examples of two projects in which I was involved that I feel can be helpful in illustrating the approach I am advocating. One is an example of a policy-driven initiative that occurred at the national level, and the other is a project focused at the local or institutional level when I was a faculty member at the University of Maryland. In briefly describing these two examples, I'll offer my ideas about what I think worked with these initiatives and what didn't work.

The first example is AERA'S Panel on Racial Dynamics in Higher Education. This initiative, conceived of and funded by James Banks during his presidency of AERA, was designed to marshal social science evidence that could be used to inform the debate about affirmative action in college admissions. The panel was convened by Kenji Hakuta of Stanford University and James Jones of the University of Delaware and the American Psychological Association. Mitch Chang and Daria Witt were also part of the convening group. The panel itself was comprised of some of the greatest scholars in the country who came together to chart a path of action, select authors for commissioned papers, and then provide feedback on these papers as the process unfolded. This was an incredible experience for me as a developing scholar because of the opportunity to receive feedback on my work from these great thinkers as the work evolved. This project was a great example of the strength of collaboration.

We did a number of things intended to maximize the potential impact of this initiative. In doing our work, we decided that we wanted to target the U.S. Supreme Court—or, more specifically, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor on the Supreme Court. It was clear to us, based on the judicial views of members of the court, that Justice O'Connor would cast the deciding vote in the Michigan cases. Because Justice O'Connor was an alumna of the Stanford University Law School, the project was based at Stanford. Moreover, when we presented our findings at a national conference, the Stanford Law School hosted it. Finally, when we published the results of our work in *Compelling Interest* (Chang, Witt, Jones, and Hakuta, 2003), Stanford University Press published it.

We also targeted a second court: the court of public opinion. In *Compelling Interest*, we addressed four primary myths about racial dynamics on college campuses that we thought were key in informing the debate about affirmative action in college admissions. Each of the myths or misconceptions became the focus of a chapter. The first myth or misconception was that there was no longer a need for affirmative action in higher education because the playing field had been leveled. Those who make this statement assert that inequities in access and opportunities in higher education for members of different racial and ethnic minority groups are a thing of the past. However,

in their chapter, Bill Trent and his associates from the University of Illinois provided abundant evidence documenting the impact that past and persisting inequalities in access and educational opportunities have for low-income children and children of color in the United States.

The second misconception was that merit in college admissions can (or should) be defined exclusively by standardized test scores. Linda Wightman provided what I think is the best primer on standardized tests that I have read. Linda agreed that standardized tests can play a useful role when they are used as one of many indicators of merit but that these scores are not used appropriately when too much emphasis is placed on them in the admissions process. Standardized tests are designed to predict only students' grades at the end of their first year of college. Moreover, the correlation between standardized tests and first-year grades is modest. Linda estimated that the average correlation between the tests and first-year grades is approximately .4. In statistical terms, this means we can attribute only about 16% of the variance in first-year grades to students' standardized test scores. In short, those who advocate very narrow definitions of merit assume that these test scores are more helpful than they really are in predicting student success.

The third misconception we addressed was that fairness could be achieved through race-neutral approaches. Embedded in this argument is the belief that racism is no longer an issue in our society. However, as Shana Levin described in her chapter, research in social psychology clearly indicates that racism persists as a major societal concern. If we were to take color-blind approaches to admissions in higher education, as advocated by opponents of affirmative action, we would not improve conditions in our society; in fact, these approaches would preserve the racial status quo.

The final misconception, which I addressed in my chapter in *Compelling Interest*, was that increased racial diversity in higher education benefits only students of color. On the contrary, as the work of many of us in this room has established, individual students, the institutions they attend, the private sector, and our society at large derive important benefits from campus diversity.

However, an important caveat must be mentioned here. The work that we have done in documenting the benefits of diversity clearly has established that the *context* in which diversity is enacted matters greatly. If we are to achieve the benefits that diverse colleges and universities can confer, we must transform our institutions in ways that allow us to minimize the challenges to teaching and learning and maximize the opportunities for learning that campus diversity can provide. One important conclusion that emerges from reviews of the scholarship on diversity is that the vitality, stimulation, and educational potential of an institution are directly related to the composition of its student body, faculty, and staff. Campus communities that are more

racially diverse tend to create more richly varied educational experiences. These experiences help students learn better and prepare them for participation as engaged citizens in an increasingly diverse, democratic society.

So, how did we do regarding the goals that we had for the AERA panel? Based on Justice O'Connor's opinion in the *Grutter v. Bollinger* decision, we had some success in convincing the U.S. Supreme Court that diversity is a compelling interest. As far as the court of public opinion goes, I think that we failed pretty miserably. The evidence can be seen in the public hostility toward affirmative action, the passing of ballot initiatives in many states, including Michigan, banning the use of race or gender in any state programs, and continued attempts to put these initiatives on the ballots in many states. One of these initiatives will be on the ballot in my home state of Arizona next November.

Finally, I must admit that it would be very difficult to replicate the AERA panel initiative today. Clearly, our success on that issue was the exception, not the rule, when we look at our efforts as educational scholars to influence public policy issues. We had the luxury of sufficient time and necessary resources to complete our work. However, I still think that we can learn some things from this experience that can be useful to us as we consider how to do more work that matters.

This brings me to my second example: the Provost's Research Collaborative at the University of Maryland. In the months preceding the final decision in the University of Michigan admissions lawsuits, the associate counsel and an Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs (also an attorney) did an institutional inventory of all of the program areas/initiatives at the University of Maryland where race was used as a factor in making programmatic decisions. I am sure that they started this project because they believed that the Michigan lawsuits were going to turn out differently than they did. Hence, they were trying to determine where the university would need to make programmatic changes post-*Grutter* and *Gratz*. Hence, it was a pleasant surprise that the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the idea that educational institutions have a compelling interest in creating diverse educational environments and that, in the right circumstances, race could be used as one of many factors in making programmatic decisions.

Because of the work that I had previously done (but especially because of my work with the AERA Panel on Racial Dynamics), they asked me to help them determine whether we could provide empirical evidence of the University of Maryland's assertion that diversity was a compelling interest at our institution. For about two months, I met regularly with both attorneys, giving them a tutorial on the diversity research up to that point. We talked about the type of research program that would need to be in place if our institution were to successfully provide empirical evidence about the benefits

of diversity. After we had done this, the attorneys, provost office staff, and I wrote an official policy statement, rooted in the scholarship on diversity, addressing the educational value of diversity at the University of Maryland.

I was asked to create and provide leadership for the Provost's Research Collaborative at the University of Maryland. This collaborative was a multi-method program of research designed to assess the impact of students' engagement with diversity at the university on a range of important educational outcomes. This program grew out of our involvement in the Diverse Democracy Project, a research project headed by Sylvia Hurtado that explored the educational outcomes of diversity at 10 public universities. From the very beginning of this project, I planned to use the data we gathered to challenge the dominant discourse regarding diversity at Maryland and to try to shift it from one of preservation to one of transformation.

Let me provide a couple of examples of how we used the data that we gathered to challenge the discourse regarding diversity on our campus. We accepted every invitation that we received to present findings from this research, and we actively sought opportunities—even when we weren't asked—to address groups or individuals who we knew were influential in shaping diversity policies on our campus. With a few slides from the dozens of presentations we did with various campus constituents, I'll show you how we were able to stir things up a bit. Similar to the approach that the AERA panel used, we targeted some specific myths or misinformation that we knew existed regarding diversity on the Maryland campus.

Given the compositional diversity of the University of Maryland, many campus leaders assumed that entering students had already experienced significant exposure to racial diversity. However, our data demonstrated that Maryland students were not unlike college students across the country; they came from highly segregated schools, communities, and peer groups. In presenting these data, we pointed out that we live in a society that is more racially segregated than it was 30 years ago (Orfield & Eaton, 1996) and, as a result, for most Maryland students—especially White students—their first chance to meaningfully engage diversity would be when they came to our campus. We used data like these to underscore the essential role that the university needed to play in giving students opportunities to interact with others across communities of difference while they were in college.

A second myth that we often heard on campus was that the university's diversity was one of the most important reasons that students gave for choosing the University of Maryland. While this was true for some students, our data revealed that it was clearly not true for all students. Students of color were much more likely than White students to report that the diversity of the student body was "very important" or "essential" in their college choice decision. Black students were more than two and a half times as likely as White students to report that campus diversity was important and were

more than five times as likely to identify it as essential in influencing their decision to attend Maryland.

On a related note, students from different racial backgrounds disclosed different expectations regarding their college experience, especially their expectations about engaging with diverse others and diverse experiences. These data illustrated that, while all students expected that they would get to know people from diverse backgrounds, White students were less likely than students of color to report that they expected to be involved in activities that would facilitate these opportunities.

Two years after we surveyed our first cohort of students, we administered a follow-up survey. The combined data yielded some fascinating (and at times troubling) findings that we used to stimulate campus discussions about diversity.

For many years, the Office of the Associate Provost/Dean of Undergraduate Studies worked to develop an undergraduate research program at Maryland. These programs have great potential to enhance student growth and positive learning and developmental outcomes because of the opportunities that students have for meaningful contact with faculty members (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The university dedicated considerable time, effort, and institutional resources to this program with the goal of providing these experiences to as many undergraduates as possible. At the end of their second year, we asked students to indicate if they had been involved in faculty research. About 17% of our students reported that they had—not a surprising percentage when you consider that they were only sophomores at the time. However, what was surprising, and extremely troubling, was that not a single African American or Latino male reported being involved in research with one of their teachers. We used this finding to stimulate a great deal of discussion among institutional leaders. In fact, one of the university's colleges worked with a colleague and me to audit its scholarships, special programs, and departmental and college awards. Disturbingly, this audit found that the pattern of exclusion extended to them as well. As a result, the deans and department chairs in this college actively engaged this problem and sought ways to resolve it.

While we used a number of other measures of the behavioral climate to stimulate discussions and action at Maryland, I will highlight one more for its usefulness in chipping away at myths about cross-race interaction at Maryland. A frequent element in the public discourse about campus diversity is racial balkanization or self-segregation, and the prevailing view held by many is that students of color segregate themselves (Hurtado et al., 1998, 1999). However, previous research has revealed that students of color are more likely than White students to interact across communities of difference (Hurtado, Dey, & Treviño, 1994), and our data showed similar patterns among Maryland students. Students of color were much more likely than

White students to report that they had interacted across communities of difference in both the academic and social environments of the college.

These are just a few examples of the many ways we used data gathered from our students to stimulate reflection and discussion about the status of diversity on the campus at Maryland. In highlighting information from our surveys, we were able to point out to members of the campus community how little they really knew about our students, their attitudes about, beliefs about, and experiences with diversity and cross-racial interactions prior to coming to the university. Moreover, we were able to stimulate a great deal of discussion about how this information could be used to optimize the opportunities that students had to learn from diverse others.

What worked? In both cases, we focused our work on timely and policy-relevant issues that needed to be addressed. In both cases, the work that we did built on a strong tradition of scholarship in education and the social sciences. In fact, the model for the AERA panel was the social science evidence assembled to inform the *Brown v. Board* cases. It was a good reminder for me that education is an applied field that should draw on a variety of disciplinary tools and perspectives to address real issues and problems.

In both the AERA panel and the Provost's Research Collaborative, teams of scholars came together to work collaboratively in a way that strengthened our collective work and helped to develop a new generation of scholars. For example, at Maryland I was able to secure funding for two graduate assistants to work on this project. In addition, we had a larger team of volunteer researchers who were also involved in our work. As a result, we had the opportunity to develop a new generation of scholars who were adept at doing this interesting and challenging work. In the five years I was engaged with this work at Maryland, at least a dozen different graduate students worked on this research. Moreover, some students are still using these data in their scholarship. Others who have moved on from Maryland continue to engage in this important work individually and collaboratively.

In both projects, I was able to collaborate with senior colleagues who helped to build alliances and gain support from key constituents who were integral to the success of these projects. Clearly, we can build strength with numbers.

Both of these initiatives provided opportunities for us to synthesize existing data and to generate new data that required policymakers and institutional leaders to take a hard look at the status of diversity on our campuses and in our society. In a relatively short time, we stimulated numerous discussions about the role that diversity plays on our college campuses.

What didn't work? At any level, the politics of doing this work are very difficult. Numerous constituents are suspicious of this work. Some seek to disrupt it. It is important to position the work in a way that enhances prospects for success. For example, I mentioned earlier how we achieved this goal

with the AERA panel. At Maryland, I made sure that I worked directly for the provost, not the IR director, not an associate provost, not my department head, and not my dean.

We need to recognize that we don't always see the fruits of our efforts right away, but we often plant seeds for the future. We need to take the long view that we are making preparations for others who will come after us. Even taking this philosophical view, however, it's painful to admit that we didn't successfully institutionalize this work. Not long after I left the University of Maryland, the program ended. It may have ended even if I had stayed, given that a new provost came on board just as I was leaving the university.

What can ASHE do? There are things that we can do as individuals and as an organization to enhance the support that we provide to develop new members of our profession. The first is to ensure that mentoring is a central part of the work that we do. As one small but important step toward this goal, I am pleased to announce the creation of a new award from ASHE this year that will recognize the contributions of one of our members in mentoring young professionals. This award was given for the very first time at the awards luncheon, and the inaugural winner of this award was Marilyn Amey from Michigan State University.

Second, based on our success with the ASHE Equity Institutes that resulted from the good ideas and the hard work of Estela Bensimon and a number of our other ASHE colleagues, I think that we should find a way to continue this important work so that it becomes institutionalized as a regular part of our organization. These institutes provide important mechanisms through which we help to train developing scholars to do critical policy research that addresses the most pressing challenges that we face in higher education—the issues of equity, access, and success.

As an organization, we need to connect the expertise of our members to important educational and social policy issues. Therefore, after the conference, the ASHE Office will act upon the recommendation of one of the task forces that Linda Eisenmann created to generate an experts' database of ASHE members so that outside entities can more easily access the wealth of knowledge that we offer individually and collectively on these important issues.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that we will create a task force to determine the feasibility of moving the ASHE office permanently to Washington, D.C. This move could help us resolve a couple of challenges that we have as an organization. The task force will report its results to our incoming president, Bill Zumeta, and the ASHE Board of Directors. Having a presence in Washington would allow us to increase our ability as an organization to influence critical policy issues. It could also provide a stable location for the ASHE Office. It has become increasingly difficult for us to find campuses that are willing to host our central office. In response to our last call for proposals, we received only one bid. The health and viability of ASHE are

heavily dependent on our ability to staff and support a central office that coordinates the work of our organization.

In closing, I'd like to ask you to reflect again on what we want our legacy—as scholars and as an organization of scholars—to be and how we can enhance our likelihood of doing work that really matters, work that addresses the critical issues and problems that higher education institutions currently face.

To help me do this, I will draw upon the work of Ron Takaki, one of our colleagues whom we lost this past year. In his book *A Different Mirror*, he re-tells American history from a multicultural perspective. A key point of this book is that multiculturalism has been a part of the history of the United States since before our country was founded. In his introduction to the book, Takaki uses the work of Adrienne Rich to describe why he wrote this view of our collective history. What happens, to borrow the words of Adrienne Rich, “when someone with the authority of a teacher” describes our society, and “you are not in it”? Such an experience can be disorienting—“a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing” (Takaki, 1993, p. 16).

I ask you to consider what people see in the mirrors that you hold up in the work that you do and the mirrors that we hold up to them as a community of scholars?

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