



EAST TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY

Office of the President

2014 ETSU Staff Convocation Tuesday, September 30, 2014

Thank you, and good afternoon. I want take this opportunity to thank Staff Senate President Josh Whitlock and the other senate members for their work in organizing this event and for all they do each day throughout the year to be a voice and advocate for the staff members at East Tennessee State University. I also want to recognize Lisa Belcher for her leadership as president during the past year. Lisa, it has been an honor working with you and I commend you for your efforts to promote and advance the work of the Staff Senate. Let's give her a round of applause.

Can you believe we are already into the 6th week of the fall 2014 semester at East Tennessee State University? In some ways, we have settled back into our normal routines, but the energy and excitement that surrounds this campus at the start of the fall semester is still very much alive.

As we have settled into the 2014-15 academic year, I have been struck by the “feel” of campus this fall. Maybe it is just me, but something feels different on campus this year. Maybe it has been the weather, but there is a richer sense of energy, enthusiasm, and excitement about our University across the community than I have felt in a long time.

Colleges transform individuals, but great universities transform communities, and you would be hard pressed to find another university in the south with a more significant impact on its community than we have here at ETSU. We educate the region's teachers, nurses, small business owners, bankers, and physicians. Our students faculty and staff assist small business owners in their startup operations; we volunteer in local schools serving as mentors to children across the region; we assist our K12 partners with professional development, and principal leadership training; we provide access to healthcare for the underserved; we bring world-class music, art, and cultural opportunities to Appalachia; we conduct research on the critical healthcare challenges facing our region; we operate museums that bring excitement and a deepened interest in our rich history; but most importantly we remain steadfast in our commitment to transforming the lives of the people of East Tennessee. We are not a city on a hill, for we are the people who built the hill.

Throughout our history we have opened the doors of college opportunity for countless Tennesseans. We have also taken that opportunity and assisted students in realizing the dream of a college degree. In fact we have done this so well that more than 85% of the population in a 30 mile radius around campus who hold a baccalaureate degree received that degree from ETSU.

Graduation begins every day that we walk onto this campus. Graduation begins every day that students come to your office for advising, that they come to you with questions about their financial aid or transcripts, or ask for help using services in the library. Each person in this room and every staff member at this institution are part of that journey toward graduation:

- You make our campus look beautiful.
- You plan activities and events for our students.

- You advise students, providing academic and career planning as well as counseling services to students who struggle with life's challenges.
- You keep our campus safe.
- You travel to high schools and meet with prospective students.
- You raise money for scholarships.
- You provide staff support for our faculty members.
- You process tuition payments and ensure that our students have financial aid.
- You point our students in the right direction. You are there when they need help.

Every May and December, we witness the results of those efforts as our students cross the stage to receive their degrees. You are part of that journey toward graduation. You help students realize their dreams, and that is what staff members have been doing at ETSU since 1911.

Mention the name of Dorman Stout to anyone associated with East Tennessee State University and the reaction is always the same: respect and admiration. The Stout family has a long association with ETSU. Dorman Senior taught Sociology, and he did it so well that his colleagues named a building for him: Rogers-Stout Hall. There was no question where his son, Dorman Jr., would go to school. He earned a bachelor's degree from East Tennessee State College in 1952. When he came back to our campus as an employee, after earning a master's degree from Columbia and a doctorate from Florida State, he remembered what it was like to be a student, and he quickly developed a reputation as the supreme student advocate. As a faculty member, as director of financial aid, as assistant dean of students, then dean of students, then vice president for student affairs, he kept student concerns and student welfare at the forefront.

Truly, he is one of the most beloved figures in the history of ETSU. He is remembered as one of the loudest cheerleaders at athletic events. He is remembered for leading the singing of the alma mater at hundreds of dinners and events on campus. He is remembered for working hand-in-hand with the Student Government Association to plan Homecoming, meeting virtually every week with the students all summer long. In retirement, his affection for his alma mater remains as strong as ever. He and his wife Betty still reside in "Scholars' Hollow (Holler)" on the south side of the city, just minutes away from the campus. He has been called the epitome of the Southern gentleman. And the ultimate Buccaneer.

Just across the street, in "Scholars' Hollow," lives Jean Copeland. Seven days after receiving her college degree at Tennessee Tech, she came to work in the Business Office at East Tennessee State, in the middle of wartime, 1942. The office was without a leader. Jean took over the job, without the title, pledging to stay here a year. She's still here in Johnson City. During the war, she processed refunds for students called to combat duty. Some she would meet again. Others made the ultimate sacrifice on the battlefields, in the air, and on the seas.

Once the war was over, Jean worked hard to help newly discharged veterans transition to the college classroom. While her husband Tommy taught biology, Jean quietly worked the system, translating rules and regulations and policies into accommodation and acceptance for students of various economic backgrounds who sought the benefits of higher education. Long before "access" became a common term in higher education, Jean lived it. She loved the students who

came to her for help, and many of them remembered her kindness long after their graduation day.

Going back into the university's history much farther, let me tell you about another person who had a deep and lasting impact on the life of this campus for over 40 years. He didn't sit behind a desk or around a board room table. Instead, he fed the bodies and souls of the East Tennessee State campus for over four decades, beginning in 1915, just four years after the opening of East Tennessee State Normal School. Long before there was ARAMARK, there was Hyder Bundy. He nourished the campus not only with the food he prepared but also with the wisdom he dispensed. In the 1940s and '50s, President Dossett, a Democrat, often relied on Chef Bundy for political advice and help in forging good relations with the black community in the area. It was common for President Dossett to seek advice in the campus kitchen, along with a piece of Chef Bundy's incomparable apple pie.

Chef Bundy fed the campus through the Great Depression, when it got so bad here that faculty and staff went months without a paycheck. He knew almost everyone on the campus, and the 1955 yearbook dedication gave him the ultimate compliment, describing him as a "counselor and friend to every student."

Those words "counselor and friend to every student" also describe a longtime ETSU staff member who, in just over a month, will retire after 37 years of service. Dr. Sally Lee came to ETSU in 1978 as the student development coordinator and she has worked in our student affairs division her entire time on campus. She has worked with the Greek organizations, our orientation programs, and, since 2000, has been the adviser for our Student Government Association. She also helped plan our Centennial celebration, served in leadership roles for the CPA and our student activities center, and has stayed up all night with the students to help with our Relay for Life event. But, by far, one of her greatest legacies is our Preview program, which she helped start in 1983 and has been involved with ever since. Sally, I'm going to miss you, especially next year during Preview, and I thank you for all you have done for the past 37 years to help our students be successful and to realize their dreams.

As I mentioned a moment ago, we have an amazing public safety team who works to keep our students, our employees and our campus safe. Let me share with you a little bit about one of those officers. You've seen her around campus, patrolling the sidewalks on foot and bicycle. She loves being out, interacting with our students and being accessible when needed for help. She even has office hours in Centennial Hall, when students may drop in to ask questions.

But what ETSU Public Safety Officer Amanda Worley is perhaps best known for, both on- and off-campus, is her service as the Tennessee state director of RAD – the Rape Aggression Defense program. Through RAD, Amanda teaches women how to be aware of their surroundings and alert for warning signs of danger, and trains them in basic self-defense techniques that could possibly save their lives. She is so passionate about sharing the message of the RAD program that she not only offers it here at ETSU, but also leads or assists with RAD workshops at Tusculum College, Walters State and Northeast State community colleges, area Girl Scout troops, community centers and churches.

I could share these stories of our amazing staff all afternoon and evening. Every day you help to achieve greatness at this institution and every day you work with our students to ensure that they have that opportunity to realize the dream of a college degree. Thank you for all that you will do during the 2014-15 academic year to transform the lives of our students whose path toward graduation begins today. Godspeed, and Go Bucs!