

**President Donald C. MacMaster Presidential Inaugural Speech  
October 30, 2015**

Before we get started I would like to thank Barb S., Penny Boldrey, Jay Walterreit in our office, ACC faculty Todd Artley, and Tim Kuenhein, and Nick Brege and the maintenance and custodial crew for their inspired efforts in pulling all the details of this event together and making our campus look good.

Wendy, thank you for the inspiring invocation, Alex, Jeff, Mike and Matt, thanks for your generous and insightful comments. Thanks finally to the ACC Board of Trustees for their support of ACC and our efforts to do our best for students. Could we have a round of applause for these folks?

Thank you all for coming out. This is a memorable day for Alpena Community College and it inspires a natural tendency to reflect on yesterday, today, and tomorrow. During the past four months, my eyes have been repeatedly opened to the influence of this institution, and how far and wide and deep it extends.

- Ibrahim Issa and Gusan Marwa: An ACC grad along with 20 other young men from Arab countries whose first exposure to the U.S. was here, at ACC. “These were some of the best days of our lives.”
- Walking down State, turning down Williams, ducked into a Five Guys Burgers and Fries. In 1986, Jerry Murrell and his four sons opened the first Five Guys restaurant in the DC area. By 2001 through positive word of mouth, five more restaurants opened. Between 2003 and the 2015, however, 1000 new Five Guys restaurants opened, with another 1500 in development. A recent article in the Motley Fool, a respected Wall Street newsletter, estimated the value of the company if it were to go public at more than \$5 billion. Jerry Murrell is an ACC grad. When he spoke at graduation a couple years ago, he reflected on the transformative role his time here had on his life. Raised in very modest means, he said soon learned that the instructors here were smart, and that he could learn something of value from them. And so he did...An ACC grad.
- While I was calorie loading at the Five Guys, I spotted a Michigan Daily student newspaper sitting at a nearby table...Flipping through I spotted a feature on the UM Gymnastics team and the Coach Kurt Golder. Coach Golder is one of the most successful Big Ten coaches in history. He was an assistant gymnastics coach for the USA at the last Olympics...he’s an ACC grad.
- The a couple weeks back, a young man named Jered Miller poked his head in the office. A veteran wounded in one of the post-9/11 conflicts, Jered arrived in 2010 by way of Montana, following in the footsteps of friends there who had journeyed out to complete the Concrete Tech program, and who had their lives transformed by the experience. Jered thrived out here and after graduation in 2012, he went to work for Quikrete on the west coast. In the three years since, Jered is now responsible for quality control in 10 western states, managing seven companies and 38 separate plants. His career arc is meteoric.

“I can’t say enough about how many doors this program opened.”

These are slices of a rich crust of legacy representing skill, passion, and commitment over 62 years. This is our legacy and it is good.

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So where are we today?

Even more than the past, the present is hard to boil down to a single aphorism. Almost every day feels alive with creative juices in which ACC staff must be diligent, resourceful, and adaptive about identifying opportunities and seizing them within our means. A short list of current examples include:

- Completion of the Electric Power Technology Center including a wind turbine and a pair of electric car charging stations.
- Obtaining Higher Learning Commission approval to offer ACC’s first 4-year Bachelor’s degree in Electrical Systems Technology,
- Development of the Marine Tech program with student using underwater robots to do research on Great Lakes shipwrecks and archaeology.
- An ACC Marine Tech student intern doing field research on a ship at the mouth of the Mississippi River.
- Evolution of the welding program with new equipment procured,
- Research into carbon capture at the WCCT and working with companies seeking new green concrete mix designs with recyclable products for extensive use in Hurricane Sandy restoration across the East Coast.
- Our evolving work with the county in Unmanned Aerial Systems testing, training, and technology with seminars on drone delivered to nearly 250 people since August.
- The continued inspired work of the Association of Lifelong Learners.
- Lecture events like the one last night on German reunification 25 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall.
- A \$6.7 million Capital Outlay proposal to double the size of the Nursing program and repurpose Van Lare Hall.
- A new tech training lab at our Huron Shores branch campus to service Iosco County aerospace and automotive sector employers.
- Regional K-12 math and ACC math instructors collaborating on innovative uses of technology in Math classrooms.
- Science Olympiad.
- The inspired efforts of ACC fine arts students in preparation for Evening with the Arts.
- The fundamental role of the ACC Foundation in organizing scholarships for students and capital campaigns on behalf of the college.
- Recruiting, marketing, and enrollment management efforts that have ACC faculty and staff ranging across the state.

- Early College and Dual Enrollment partnerships with our friends from Alpena Public Schools and other regional K-12s.
- A cross country team of men and women running for Academic All-American status.
- Faculty led research into better ways to deliver development instruction.
- Student leadership and the Student Nurses Association reaching out to the community.

The list could easily extend another 20 bullet points. Within all this flurry of positive, productive activity it can be difficult to answer the question: what is it we do at community colleges?

I'd like to take a shot at clarifying that. Track with me a bit.

One of the delights of this job is having access to moments of history. One such moment occurred on September 9, when I was invited by Macomb Community College president Dr. Jim Jacobs to attend a presentation by President Barack Obama on the Macomb campus promoting the America's Promise Act, an ambitious plan, similar in some ways to the Kalamazoo Promise, to make community college tuition free and thereby more accessible to millions of Americans. Macomb County in suburban Detroit is an interesting place. The focus of a famous study by pollster Stan Greenberg, its unique mixture of working class whites, labor unions, young people, racial, ethnic and religious diversity all blended together to create a politically predictive subculture known as "Reagan Democrats"—and Macomb Community College, as any vibrant community college should, still reflects that singular community feel.

Five presidents from Michigan Community colleges were in attendance, standing tightly packed in a hot gymnasium with perhaps a thousand other attendees excited to hear the President speak. In the front row was Grand Rapids Community College president Dr. Steven Ender. GRCC enrolls more than 15,000 students, ten times the enrollment of ACC, so perhaps Dr. Ender could be excused for being impatient, imperious, and condescending, but in fact he is distinguished among his peers for his thoughtful, down-to-earth, informed, humane approach—certainly a leader worthy of emulation. Dr. Ender was in the front row. Next to him was a student who appeared to have a degenerative muscular or nerve disorder—maybe Lou Gehrig's disease—who was laboring in the hot, sweaty, packed gymnasium to situate his braces to remain standing. Midway through the speech, president Ender reached over and without any drama or self-consciousness looped an arm around the student, supporting him in his desire to stay standing for the President as he gave his address not more than 30 feet away.

Near the end of his speech, President Obama quoted former President Ronald Reagan when he spoke at Macomb Community College more than 30 years before.

"Our duty," said Obama, quoting Reagan, "is to make sure that you have the same America of opportunity and hope and dreams and future that we had when we were your age." While noting how differently he and President Reagan viewed the most effective way to economically arrange the world, President Obama concluded. "I agree with these words. In America it should not matter who you are,

where you come from, what your last name is...everybody deserves a chance to make it. Everybody deserves opportunity, hope, dreams, and a future.”

When we’re at our best, like President Ender, this is what we do...we support people who decide they want to stand up on their own terms, or are determined to remain standing, and we help them find their way toward hope, dreams, and a better future.

This is what we do every day, and it is good.

So then the question becomes, what lies ahead? What will tomorrow bring?

We face challenges:

- Like many community colleges in Michigan, declining enrollment due primarily to decreasing numbers of traditional-aged students at each of the high schools in our five-county service district, plus an improving economy, impacts our capacity long-term.
- Public investment in higher education increasingly is competing with other worthy spending priorities, such as roads, health care, pension liabilities, and K-12 education.
- As recent events in Oregon demonstrate, unpredictable and unprecedented levels of violence on college campuses is an ongoing safety concern.
- Maintaining superior levels of technology for students entering college with legitimate expectations of any time, any pace, and any place menu of educational options.
- Improving retention so more students who begin college here transfer or complete with a credential.

In addition to the College mission, goals and value, which provide focus and guidance to our collective efforts, there are seven behaviors I shared with staff during startup that I believe best position ACC to adapt to the challenges and opportunities we will inevitably face down the road. I’d like to share them with you plus a stripped down version that I use to keep each clear in my mind as I come to work each day.

- Responsive  
"Opportunities multiply as they are seized"
- Engaged  
"Community is our middle name"
- Energetic  
"Bring abiding vitality, every day."
- Positive  
"Put some heart in it."
- Collaborative

"Work hard, work smart, and work together."

- Professional  
"What's best for the students?"
- Forward-looking  
"Our best days lie ahead."

Final Thoughts:

Finally, a day like today not only inspires reflection, it prompts us to count our blessings. And I have a few I'd like to share with you this afternoon:

....blessed with great parents who believed in stewardship, hard work, family, practical good sense, the long view, and leaving things in better shape than you found them.

....blessed with a wonderful wife, remarkable partner, and gifted healer.

....blessed with four outstanding children of sound character who make us proud.

....blessed with great brothers, their wives, and our nieces and nephews.

....blessed with trusted and loyal friends who have been greatly influential along the way.

....blessed to have landed here 23 years ago, at this college in this community.

....blessed with mentors who demonstrated what it means to plug in, focus, and get the right things done.

....blessed to have had the opportunity to do impactful work.

....blessed to be standing here before you now, the 7<sup>th</sup> president in the 62-year history of Alpena Community.

Thank you so much for coming and for your continued support of ACC.