

**State of the College Address**  
**President Todd S. Hutton**  
**August 29, 1999**  
**Shaping the Utica College Community of the Future:**  
**The Journey Begins (or “Hold onto Your Hats!”)**

Today marks the beginning of my second year at Utica College. Twelve months ago this week I stood before the Class of 2002 and their parents, our new transfer students, our faculty and staff, and our trustees feeling excitement and exhilaration about joining this community. I must admit that I also felt a bit of anxiety. Those of you who have sung in a chorus, played in an ensemble, performed in a theatre production, suited up for a football game, stepped into starting blocks, or prepared for a new class know the feeling well. A year later I am even more excited, but I am also more familiar with Utica College. What was anxiety is now nervous energy, mixed with the normal dose of adrenaline and the inevitable butterflies before any big event.

I arrived in Utica twelve months ago with a genuine affinity for this college and an immediate sense of belonging. Since then, the blush of a new relationship has given over to a deepening affection and admiration for the UC community. It has been reaffirmed to me over this past year that we are a college with remarkable strength and talent, a rich learning environment, distinctive programs, and a legacy of academic innovation, creativity and community service. The newest members of our community will find, as I did, that we are a campus of individuals eager to learn and dedicated to continuing self-improvement.

So it is fitting that as we enter our 54<sup>th</sup> academic year, we take a moment to review recent achievements and improvements. The most important by far, but not always easily witnessed, are the achievements of our students and faculty. While it is impossible in the amount of time that I have to mention all of the accomplishments of 1998-99, I want to offer a sampling.

During the past year, a number of Utica College students captured major academic honors. Sara Schecter was awarded a fellowship by the American Society for Microbiology for the second successive year, and presented a research paper at the 99<sup>th</sup> General Meeting of the society in June. We understand that this was the first time in the society's history that an undergraduate student received a fellowship two years running. Another student, Cassandra Teeter, presented a research paper at the prestigious Council on Undergraduate Research Posters on the Hill program in Washington, D.C. This is particularly notable since Utica College joined the Council for first time last year and the selection process for presentations at the national meeting is highly competitive. Professor Larry Aaronson has mentored both of these undergraduate scholars. Two students in Sociology, Polly Smith and Ericka Bennett, presented research papers on social policy and economic equity and on gender and politics,

respectively, at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Sociological Society. These student-scholars were mentored by Professor Susanne Mauer.

One of the college's 1998 graduates, Ben Couch, now a graduate student in American Literature at the University of Arizona, has had a paper accepted for publication in the prestigious journal *Studies in Short Fiction*. I mention this achievement here because the paper was written during his undergraduate days at Utica College. Our students have distinguished themselves in other fields as well. Members of the college's Raymond Simon Chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America captured second prize in the society's national competition. This was the second time in three years that the chapter achieved a national award. Over two hundred teams from across the country were invited to design and present a public awareness campaign. The UC team was among fifteen selected for the final competition based upon the quality of its proposal.

Utica College students brought home other particularly noteworthy honors. Student-athlete John Smith was one of eight finalists for the National Collegiate Athletic Association's Outstanding Sportsperson of the Year Award. John and the other finalists were selected from 160 nominees, representing thousands of student-athletes at Division I, II and III. John's recognition as a finalist for this national award reflects the leadership and teaching philosophy of our Athletic and Physical Education Department, which itself was the recipient of the first annual Empire Athletic Association Sportsmanship award. Our student-athletes, coaches, trainers and athletic administrators were selected for this award by the consensus of athletic directors and coaches at the eight member schools.

The achievements of our faculty during 1998-99 are also noteworthy. I have counted no less than thirty-six faculty who either published a book, article or book review; presented a paper or poster session; or received an outside grant. At least ten faculty held leadership positions in professional associations or editorships for professional journals.

Clearly, our faculty continue to distinguish themselves in their chosen fields. Although the achievements are too numerous to mention each and every one, I do want to provide several examples. The first is the work of English Professor Mary Ann Janda, who presented four papers during the spring semester alone. Two of the papers focused on such subjects as "Student as Writer/Writer as Worker: Integrating Roles in the Writing Classroom," presented at the Conference on College Composition and Communication in Atlanta, and "Libraries, Literacy and Literary Life: An Examination of the Literacy History of Edith Wharton," presented at the 30<sup>th</sup> College English Association Conference in Philadelphia. These two scholarly papers are excellent examples of how teaching and research can and should enrich one another in an institution like Utica College. They also represent two of the broad threads of scholarship. One is illustrative of a new contribution to a body of knowledge; the other is exemplary of pedagogical scholarship that helps build a better understanding of teaching and learning. A third paper that studied the use of literature as a clinical tool in providing support for bereaving people, presented with Psychology-Child Life Professor Melodee Moltman, represents a third thread in the scholarship tapestry, that of

applied research. This work is also noteworthy for its collaborative, interdisciplinary approach to scholarship.

To illustrate the rich variety of the scholarly and professional achievements by our faculty, permit me to mention just a few others. These include art exhibits in Chicago and Washington, D.C., by Fine Arts Professor Robert Cimbalo; the selection of Biology Professor Ron Lucchino as a Fellow of the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education; an article, book chapter, and a paper on human rights education by Criminal Justice and International Studies Professor Theodore Orlin, who also traveled to Albania and Kosovo to document human rights violations; a revised edition of a book on *Health Economics* and two articles in journals by Economics Professor and Associate Dean Stephen Neun; a book on *Contemporary Editing* by Public Relations and Journalism Professor Cecilia Friend and two co-authors; two articles and a paper in the field of neuroscience by Biology and Physical Therapy Professor Peter Pawson; a paper on a prevention model for Headstart by Occupational Therapy Professor Sally Townsend; an article in the *European Journal of Personality* by Psychology Professor Andrew Kinney; and the selection of Technical Services Librarian Larisa John for a 1999 Dewey Fellowship in recognition of her creativity and leadership in the field of library science.

Without question, these student and faculty achievements exemplify the quality of the educational experience and richness of the learning community here at Utica College. At the same time, they only hint at the most remarkable feature of a Utica College education, a feature that I have heard countless alumni and students describe and that I am just now beginning to witness myself. I am talking about the transforming effects that a Utica College education has on so many lives. Every plan for the future, every new building, and every new degree or program must have the intention of preserving and enhancing this quality. As we grow—and grow we must to fulfill our purposes, create a strong financial foundation and augment our diversity of people and programs—we must not lose this most essential characteristic, the ability to transform lives.

Last year as every new idea emerged and every new initiative was undertaken, the administrators, faculty and students with whom I spoke and worked were all highly attuned to the imperative that we must not forsake our best features even as we change and grow. Keeping this in mind, I want to describe some of the college's initiatives and accomplishments of 1998-99.

Early in the fall we began to erect the college's guideposts to the future. A strategic plan and accompanying academic and administrative plans will be vital if we are to achieve our ambitious goals. A committee representing the entire campus engaged in a highly participatory strategic planning process and identified seven Strategic Initiatives for the future. The college community will continue its discussion of these initiatives this fall.

One of the most significant achievements in the college's history culminated in May after four years of intensive effort. Under the leadership of foundation director emeritus Edward Duffy, trustee Dominic Carbone, and Board of Trustees chair Lauren Bull, the Campaign for Utica College dramatically surpassed its original goal of \$8 million by nearly 50 percent,

raising \$11.8 million for scholarships, endowment, academic programs and annual operations. This effort would not have been possible without the generosity of our trustees, who donated more than a third of the total; our alumni, who gave at record levels and in record numbers; our faculty and staff, who gave back to the college in an impressive way, donating almost \$200,000; our senior classes, who continued their history of giving; and the many friends of the college near and far who believe in the transforming quality of this institution. We will formally celebrate the success of the campaign at the Scholarship Luncheon on September 25<sup>th</sup>.

1998-99 saw several important academic initiatives and achievements. The faculty have undertaken a review of the general education program, recognizing that the college must have a liberal arts foundation for all students that reflects our institutional values and prepares men and women for citizenship, leadership, and life-long learning in an increasingly global society. A task force is also exploring the benefits of introducing internships or significant senior-year experiences for students in all majors. I believe that colleges like ours must take seriously the task of creating opportunities for students to integrate liberal and professional learning. Ernest Boyer gave the clarion call for this endeavor twelve years ago in his book entitled *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America*. A host of other studies and reports have underscored the need for weaving together career preparation and liberal education. Utica College can distinguish itself by how well it achieves this imperative of a contemporary education.

Other academic achievements in 1998-99 included the college's introduction of three master's degrees and the initiation of distance learning curricula in two programs—Economic Crime Management and Gerontology. The state's approval of Master of Science degrees in Economic Crime Management, Physical Therapy, and Inclusive Education, represents a major milestone in the college's history. The college now offers Syracuse University undergraduate degrees and Utica College master degrees, a rare and salutary academic relationship.

We can also count among our academic achievements the creation of the Computer Forensic Research and Development Center, funded initially with a grant from the U.S. Air Force Information Directorate in Rome and designed to conduct research in the area of computer security and crime. In keeping with our new membership in the Council for Undergraduate Research and a growing emphasis on faculty-student collaboration, our faculty organized what promises to be the first annual All-College Undergraduate Research Conference at which UC students from a variety of majors presented the results of research projects. As they say on the polo fields of England, the conference was a “smashing success.”

Under the rubric of bricks-and-mortar, but more aptly defined as the improvement of space and place for living, learning and working, we have one of the most tangible examples of progress—our new residence hall, conference center, and plaza. Designed with broad input from students, this new space has helped create a new synergy on campus and will likely create a new dynamic for student gatherings. For the curious among us, we have given this

building the temporary name of “New Hall.” “Farther South Hall” didn’t sound quite right. We encourage generous donors with a passion for improving residential living to step forward and name the building. All it will take is a mere \$1 or \$2 million.

In addition to the residence hall, there were three additional improvements in the campus living environment. The first was the renovation of the dining commons, made possible by a generous gift from the ARAMARK Corporation. The dining area was completed last winter and the new servery just days ago. The second was the initiation of the campus beautification project, which has been spearheaded by our grounds crew and two volunteers, who prefer to be known only as Diane and Liz. While we have seen only the beginnings of this project, the work of these volunteers and staff members has already made a noticeable difference and has caught the attention of community members and prospective students alike.

The third improvement in the living-learning environment of the campus was last summer’s installation of new computer labs and the extension of the network to the residence halls. While we cannot count ourselves among the one-hundred most “wired” colleges in America and while more work is yet to be done on our technology infrastructure, Utica College has joined the ranks of colleges that have invested significantly in technology as a tool for enhancing traditional modes of education and for enabling greater access through distance learning.

In the cocurricular quarters of campus life where important lessons of life and leadership occur, the college made several significant decisions and investments last year. Under the leadership of Vice President for Student Affairs Rob Woods, Athletic Director Jim “Doc” Spartano, and Vice President for Financial Affairs Barry White, the college completed a formal business plan for two new sports—men’s and women’s lacrosse. We hired two very talented teacher-coaches who joined us in January and have already had success in recruiting talented student-athletes. Their inaugural NCAA Division III seasons will be during the spring of 2000.

As if this were not enough, we decided to go a step further and add three more sports. Following an exhaustive study which demonstrated that these sports will net the college significant revenue for our academic programs, the Board of Trustees approved at its spring meeting the addition of women’s field hockey, women’s water polo, and football for academic year 2000-2001. The board also authorized the construction of a multi-sport stadium for football, lacrosse, and field hockey, as well as a 7,000 square-foot addition to the Clark Athletic Center. I am looking forward to reporting on these developments at this time next year.

Finally, I am pleased to report that our Class of 2003, all 371 of you, is the largest in over a decade and one of the most academically talented. As I look upon you today, and upon those of you who have joined us from other institutions, I see the future of this college. In many ways, our reputation and financial health will rest in your hands, as it does in the hands of classes that have come before you and that will follow you. I add my welcome to you and

your families. May the next several years be the most rewarding, challenging, and happy period of your lives.

I conclude this state of the college address with a brief synopsis of what lies ahead this year.

Utica College has made great progress during its fifty-three years of life, and our achievements are striking for an institution that is the equivalent of an adolescent among American universities and colleges. Our challenge now is to build upon these achievements. I said on numerous occasions last year and have already reiterated in this speech that I believe Utica College is entering a new era in its history—in many ways a transformational era. I want us to become one of the nation's best small universities devoted to the integration of liberal and professional study and to innovative programs and teaching. The plans that we lay now, the actions that we take, the energy that we expend will determine the future of this college

I have identified six priorities for the coming year from among a host of important goals. First, we must adopt a new system of participatory governance and consultation. Last year the College Council approved the broad outlines of a new system that provides a voice for faculty, students, administrators and support staff. A new faculty assembly will be the centerpiece of this governance system. Our task this year is to add details to the broad outline and seek final approval from the College Council, the American Association of University Professors chapter, and the Board of Trustees.

Second, we must adopt the proposed Strategic Plan that lays out the college's major guideposts for the future, and our faculty must begin to develop an academic master plan. These initiatives will help us chart the college's revitalization and transformation. Under the leadership of Vice President for Academic Affairs Mary Lee Seibert, the faculty will forge an academic plan, and administrative divisions will develop operational plans that address the initiatives and goals of the Strategic Plan. As part of the process, we will also begin to create a campus master plan, with guidance from a consulting architect. The next several weeks will be devoted to campus-wide discourse about the future of the college and the directions suggested by the seven Strategic Initiatives.

Our third priority for 1999-2000 is to agree upon a model for a new general education program that will help prepare our students for the increasingly complex and interdependent world in which we all now reside. The challenge before the Task Force on General Education and Academic Integration is to design a model that reflects the values of our college community and identifies the enduring attributes of an education that we believe are necessary for successful and fulfilling lives and careers. The task force must also account for what my colleague, Assistant Professor of English James Scannell has referred to as the "composite" nature of our student body—students with very different worldviews, motivations, and goals. As Professor Scannell has said, "It is a wonderful mix: a heap of learning, a mass of ambition, and a lump of experience."

Our fourth priority can best be described as “tooting our own horn.” We are a very good college that is in the process of getting even better, and we are in the midst of exciting developments. Communicating with alumni, marketing to prospective students, highlighting student and faculty achievements, promoting our successes, advertising our programs, and communicating effectively among ourselves on campus—all must be part of an integrated communications plan. Since we do not have million dollar budgets for communications and marketing, our challenge like any other endeavor is to build an effective public relations and communications program with finite resources and excellent talent.

Our fifth priority is to complete a needs assessment for a new science and technology center and to begin the process of designing a facility that will meet the needs of current and future generations of students and faculty. Although this building will likely house space for particular programs, it will be a center of learning for all disciplines and programs. It is my hope that it will also include space that can serve the larger community, but the precise mission and purposes of the center will emerge from the study that is now under way.

Finally, the sixth and ever-present priority is to enhance our resources and develop a stronger financial foundation for current and future programs. Utica College is stronger today than it was three years ago, but like ceramic tile, strength and brittleness go hand-in-hand. To achieve our ambitious goals, we will need to build our endowment through new dollars and astute investments, increase our annual giving, obtain major capital gifts, strengthen our grants program, effectively manage financial aid, and whenever possible, reduce the cost of operations. The Institutional Advancement Committee of the board and the Institutional Advancement staff are developing plans to address our resource needs for the next three to four years, and they invite input from all constituencies of the college.

This campus community and this student body has a soul like no other institution I have known. Our obligation as we transform and revitalize the college, building upon our strengths and upon a rich but young legacy of innovation, is to create what President Diana Chapman Walsh of Wellesley College has referred to as “spaces for the spirit.” She states in a recent article in *Change* magazine that a critical challenge before colleges and universities is to “enhance the sense of coherence, meaning, and purpose in academic life...We need faculty to provide their students with the inspiration and guidance they need to develop the habit of responsible stewardship: of choosing thoughtfully what is worthy of their care and then organizing their lives to exercise that care responsibly, consistently, and effectively.” President Walsh’s message is not unlike Father Drobin’s. A Utica College experience is a form of higher education, and as such, its purpose is more than vocational. It involves the spirit and the heart, as well as intellect and ambition. As Utica College grows and changes over the coming years, our challenge is to preserve the soul, the essential attributes of this community of learners. And our challenge is to inspire inquisitiveness and a love of learning. Helping you, our students, prepare for career is the easy part.

I end on a very personal note. Jennifer and I are deeply grateful for the welcome we have received from both the Utica College and the Greater Utica communities. We have never lived anywhere as open and accepting as we have found this area. I am also grateful for the

support of our trustees, immediate past Chair of the Board Lauren Bull, and new Chair James DuRoss, who could not be with us today but sends his greetings.

I am honored to serve as your president and to be counted as a member of this community. I pledge to you that I will continue to listen, learn, and lead. And I will continue to fulfill my duties as the chief steward of our resources, dreams, and aspirations. Working collaboratively, we will ensure a bright and prosperous future for Utica College and the generations of students, faculty, alumni, and staff to come.