

**Vision 2015 Conference**  
**Clayton Hall**  
**October 27, 2009**

**Patrick T. Harker**  
**President, University of Delaware**

Good morning. I'm Patrick Harker, president of the University of Delaware, and I'm delighted to welcome you to **Vision 2015 and Delaware's Race to the Top**.

### **Acknowledgements**

We're thrilled to have so many people critical to local and national school improvement efforts join us today.

While our Congressional delegation and several state leaders are at a press conference this morning and unable to attend, we're thrilled to have others here in their stead. I'd like to acknowledge Harlan Geer and Ed Freel from Senator Tom Carper's office. We also have Jeff Dayton with us; Jeff is State Director for Rep. Mike Castle. Thank you all for coming.

I know we're all anxious to hear from Delaware Secretary of Education Lillian Lowery, who will talk about the state's plan to strengthen public education and become a leader in the national Race to the Top initiative. Plus, Skip Schoenhals, Vision 2015 chair, will give us an update on the program's successes so far, and the challenges that remain.

I thank our conference sponsors; you'll find them in your program. They make these important conversations possible, and we're sincerely grateful for that.

Improving education is clearly a priority that resonates with many: We have several local and state officials with us this morning—and still more coming this afternoon—and I thank them for joining this dialogue.

After lunch, we'll be hearing from Governor Jack Markell and, of course, from U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

I'm sure most of you have heard or read the remarks that Secretary Duncan delivered last week at Columbia's Teachers College. It was a thought-provoking speech on teacher education and will certainly inform our first panel discussion on Ensuring Highly Effective Teachers. And, in fact, we've included in your materials a policy brief on the subject by UD Professor Jeff Raffel, distilling what we know about teacher effectiveness and its implications for state and national policy. These briefs will be a conference feature going forward.

## **Teacher Education Scope**

Clearly, the University of Delaware has a compelling interest in improving preK–12 and teacher education—not only because UD students are drawn from the state’s pool of high school graduates, but also because of the sheer reach of our teacher education and school leadership programs.

One in 10 University undergraduates is enrolled in a teacher education program. Another 600 students—including many practicing teachers and administrators—are enrolled in graduate education programs. And 1,000 continuing-ed students take education courses in any given academic year.

But the scope of our teacher-preparation efforts is only part of it. We acknowledge that teacher quality doesn’t just **matter** to student achievement. It matters more than anything else. And so we well understand our obligation to improve teacher education—to make it content rich and relevant to the preK–12 classroom.

This University’s history with reform is a notable one. In his speech at Columbia, Secretary Duncan invoked one of the country’s best-known reform movements: the Holmes Group, a coalition of education school deans—led by UD’s very own Frank Murray. The group exhorted universities to strengthen teacher preparation by building partnerships with K–12 schools. And UD has done precisely that.

## **Teacher Education Reform**

We’ve built strong clinical experiences into many of our teacher-ed programs and established one such program in Southern Delaware that’s thoroughly integrated into the Milford School District.

More recently, we’ve led the nation in developing a strong evidentiary basis for the design of teacher education programs. With more than a decade of NSF funding, we’re studying how pre-service teachers acquire the knowledge they need to teach math and science, and are now tracking graduates to see how they apply in their own classrooms the skills they learned in ours.

We’re developing math and science residency programs for graduate students, requiring that they be placed in schools with mentor teachers for a full year while taking courses at UD. And our new concentration in urban education will include intensive field placements in Wilmington City schools.

## **School Turnaround**

Of course, UD’s obligation to improve elementary and secondary education goes beyond providing a rigorous and relevant pre-service experience. We must enhance the

effectiveness of in-service teachers as well, especially those in struggling schools—which goes to this morning’s second panel discussion.

The urban education program I just mentioned—featuring a PDS at an elementary school in Wilmington—will contribute significantly to turning around chronically low-performing schools. We need to prepare teachers specifically for these challenging environments. We need to produce teachers who are eager and equipped to teach in high-poverty schools—because change simply isn’t sustainable when a half a school’s professional staff is new in any given year.

This is just part of a comprehensive effort to develop close partnerships with schools struggling to meet standards, and to provide technical assistance on their turnaround strategies—assistance borne of really knowing the school, its teachers, its leadership and, of course, its students.

### **Vision 2015**

These same kinds of relationships underpin Vision 2015. The University of Delaware is proud to be a partner in the effort. Our faculty and administrators were key contributors to the plan and its implementation strategies. And the University’s Delaware Academy of School Leadership provides executive training to the leaders of schools that are part of the Vision 2015 Network—a network that now includes 25 schools across the state and serves nearly 20,000 students; a network that’s seeing real improvement in instruction and achievement. But I’ll let our next speaker tell you a little more about that.

### **Invitation to “Creating New Economies”**

As you know, today’s conference is the 5th in a series on “Creating Knowledge-Based Partnerships.” These conferences engage leaders across the community in the most pressing issues we face as a state.

I invite you to our next conference, November 9 and 10, when we’ll discuss Creating New Economies for Delaware, the Region, and the Nation. Certainly, this is another topic of vital importance, and I hope to see you there. You can register for that conference in person today, or you can go online to [udel.edu/partnerships](http://udel.edu/partnerships).

### **Introduction of Skip Schoenhals**

I’d now like to turn the podium over to Skip Schoenhals, who, as a businessman himself, understands that the quality of a state’s educational system predicts the vitality of its industry and the health of its economy. Three years ago this month, he signed on as chair of Vision 2015, and has proved a passionate and persuasive voice for better public-education policy and practice.

We are indebted to Skip for his leadership of Vision 2015 and his obvious commitment to the children of Delaware. Please help me welcome Skip Schoenhals.

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