

Welcome Remarks at Hope in the Cities Breakfast

February 8, 2017

University of Richmond, Richmond, VA

As prepared for delivery.

Good morning and welcome to the University of Richmond. We're delighted to be joined by our special guests, Mayor Levar Stoney and Reverend Alvin Herring of the Kellogg Foundation. And, of course, it's always wonderful to see so many friendly faces among this very large crowd.

We look forward to today's discussion on how we are working together, and leveraging our unique strengths, to address racial inequities and pursue collective strategies that benefit our city and the larger world.

This is not easy work. And we all have a role to play.

For higher education, one of the most important elements of our work is to ensure that the transformative benefits of a college education are available to students from all backgrounds.

A college education – particularly an education grounded in the liberal arts—opens doors of opportunity to the widest possible array of professional opportunities for students. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, a 4-year college graduate will earn \$1 million more in her lifetime than a peer with a high school diploma.

Beyond the economic benefits to students and their communities, education allows us to harness the power of our differences to bring about real and lasting change. We know the problems our city, nation and world confront are knotty and complex. Addressing them effectively will require even more perspectives, and from all kinds of students.

At Richmond we extend this opportunity, in part, by being one of fewer than 40 institutions nationwide that are need blind in admission AND meet 100% of the demonstrated financial need of all our traditional undergraduate students—opening our doors to the most capable students.

For students in our own backyard, Richmond's Promise to Virginia provides full tuition, room and board, with no loans, to students from Virginia whose families earn less than \$60,000.

In the past decade, we have doubled the percentage of students receiving Pell Grants to 18%, and one in seven students are the first generation in their families to attend college—like I was in mine.

We are a charter member of the American Talent Initiative, launched this past December and comprised of 30 of the nation's top institutions committed to increasing socioeconomic diversity in higher education.

Today, one in three Richmond students is a domestic student of color, one in ten are international students, and first generation students and students of color enjoy graduation success at rates comparable to their class.

Colleges and universities must ensure that we extend the benefits of our institutions to all capable students in order to educate them to solve today's problems and the unscripted challenges of tomorrow. But that isn't the only way we contribute.

The research and insights of our scholars, combined with the knowledge and wisdom in our communities, can help us understand the most promising paths forward. Here, too, the University of Richmond is proud to work alongside all of you: Our faculty offer essential research about the structural inequalities in our society, and they also work to ensure that work has practical effect in our solutions.

For example, Professor Thad Williamson helped to author the Anti-Poverty Commission report for the City of Richmond. The faculty in our Digital Scholarship Lab have developed nationally recognized tools that help us to visualize and understand the processes of structural inequality through their project "Mapping Inequality." And our extensive community-based learning programs help us guide our students as they take what they have learned in the classroom and work to make meaning—and provide service—in the community.

Across campus, we are harnessing our unique strengths to address historic and current inequalities, while also striving to ensure that our own campus is a model of inclusivity, a community where all members thrive.

The University is deeply committed to these ideals, to living them on our campus and to working with partners like all of you to realize them in our community. We look forward to continuing our progress in partnership with all of you.

Thank you.