



The College of The Bahamas

## President's Remarks

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College Council Luncheon

**Christmas 2009**

**Janyne M. Hodder**

**12/9/2009**

Mr. Chairman, Madam Vice-Chair and members of The College Council, President Emerita, colleagues and friends, welcome to this, the Annual College Council Luncheon,

It gives me great pleasure, this year again, to share in this moment at the onset of the Christmas season.

Traditionally, in the Christian world, Christmas is a time to rejoice, to celebrate the birth of Jesus and its promise of joy. It is a time to celebrate family life and to give thanks for those around us whose presence has enriched our lives. For several years now, in my family, we have agreed to limit gift-giving, to make a contribution to a favourite cause instead and to enjoy Christmas by spending quality time with one another. Because we live in The Bahamas, there is no shortage of children among our six to take up our offer.

This time has become an opportunity to explore this country's natural beauty and riches. We have done this in Christmas trips to Cat Island and to Abaco and this year again, we shall be making our way back to Green Turtle Cay. I consider myself fortunate to head out for the airport watching late shoppers rush around the island, knowing that what awaits me is not a long line at the cash register, but a walk on the beach with my husband and my children to talk about the things which have happened in our lives, the things which are important to us.

This year will be particularly exciting because my husband, Gary Mullins, and I have made the decision that it is time for me to retire and for us to enter a new stage of our life together, free from the responsibilities of full-time work. On December 7<sup>th</sup>, I informed the Chairman that I was exercising my option to offer six months' notice of resignation as President of The College. I shall be leaving The College on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

As you know, when I came back, it was to offer my support to the stellar work you were doing for a three year period. This was my agreement with my husband as well. Last June, when we agreed to extend this period, we asked for this option because it was not entirely clear to us then whether we could continue to balance work and family for much longer. My grandson is now two years' old and I have seen him fewer than half a dozen times; yet, all the Grammys I know tell me that this is one of the most joyous times in one's life.

While I had hoped we would have signed a new collective agreement with the faculty by now, I acknowledge that this is taking longer though I still hope we can conclude before Christmas. I think we would all be happier if we could celebrate this holiday season, proud of this latest in a long list of collective achievements. Perhaps we will.

With respect to our university agenda, we are well on our way. Member now of the International Association of Universities, with more students enrolled in baccalaureate degrees, with new degrees under development including our own very first graduate degree, with increased levels of support for research, The College should have convinced any doubter that our faculty, supported by our staff, offer the quality and depth associated with a sound university education.

It is not that there is not more to do. We are reminded every day of ways in which we can improve, particularly with respect to facilities, but we have done much good over 35 years, and more will grow from this foundation.

We are in a process of growth and change and we are experiencing the bumps and hurdles change can bring. Yet, every year we graduate more and more students who will have better lives because of the work we do, graduates who will build a better Bahamas for all. Every year, we increase the number of degrees available, most recently in exciting ways.

While I do love all degrees equally, I must admit that the first piece of cake might go to the new Small Island Sustainability degrees, on which our faculty worked so well, showing what a committed and talented inter-disciplinary team could create of critical value to this country. I am sure there is more to come.

It is always difficult to make a decision to change – whether to get married, to change jobs or even to move into a new house. This too has not been an easy decision to make. I have been torn between a sense of duty and knowledge of the great debt I owe this country for having welcomed me forty years ago and taught me all the skills I have later used to build a career, and the desire to grow tomatoes full-time and walk my grandson to the park.

But I have always thought of myself as a President of transition, a place-holder for the person who will follow me, someone whom I hope shall have equal faith in this country, in its people and in the future of The College. I have also always believed that it is better to act in this imperfect world with one's imperfect knowledge and skills than to dream of perfection and do nothing.

While Ecclesiastes has more famous verses, verses 4 to 6 of Chapter 11, sing to me: (Ecclesiastes 11:4-6).

<sup>4</sup> *Whoever watches the wind will not plant;  
whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.*

<sup>5</sup> *As you do not know the path of the wind,  
or how the body is formed in a mother's womb,*

*so you cannot understand the work of God,  
the Maker of all things.*

<sup>6</sup> *Sow your seed in the morning,  
and at evening let not your hands be idle,  
for you do not know which will succeed,  
whether this or that,  
or whether both will do equally well.*

In my letter to Chairman Donaldson, I have assured him that I shall not let my hands (or, for that matter, my mind) be idle in the next few months and that I am committed to ensuring an orderly transition of leadership.

I have also made clear my profound gratitude to him, to Judith Whitehead, our Vice-Chair, to all members of The College Council for their support, wisdom, talent and encouragement. I am equally grateful to the Prime Minister, The Right Hon. Hubert Alexander Ingraham, to Past Minister of Education, the Hon. Carl Bethel and to members of the government for their support of our efforts to build a university to serve national development.

I owe thanks also to the previous government, to the former Prime Minister, the Hon. Perry Gladstone Christie and to the former Minister of Education, the Hon. Alfred Sears, and to members of the previous Council for their support. A very special note of gratitude must go to former Council Chair Franklyn Wilson, for his faith in The College and for his steadfast support, not only of me, but of The College, a support exemplified in his and Sharon's extraordinary generosity.

In order to thrive, an institution requires a strong governance board and we have been fortunate to have had this through successive governments. This signals to me that building a university is a national purpose, one that crosses all divisions in the country.

A heartfelt thank you also to President Emerita Keva Bethel for her outstanding leadership for so many years. I hope you will always be as proud of The College as The College is grateful to you, and I look forward to reading the story of higher education in The Bahamas – which, in so many ways, is also your story.

There are so many people to thank that I cannot begin to name them all or we would be here till evening. Still, I would like to honour the work of my office colleagues. Every morning, early in the

morning, Lorraine Hanna – as Brenell Ferguson did before her - comes to clean and dust and tidy. They do great work, both of them. Around the same early time, Janet Charlton also comes to set up whatever meeting rooms we need that day. She is always there: warm, pleasant, helpful – and steady. We also used to share the space with Anto who could always be counted on to solve problems and find documents no one else could. And then there is Jacqueline Ferguson-Rolle, my assistant, my confidante, my friend, my Exuma sister. No one could have a better colleague and I cannot thank you enough for your professionalism, your patience, your skills and your commitment to our shared work. To all of you, my deepest thanks for making our workspace an oasis of trust and professionalism.

I acknowledge also the talent and support of the warm and wonderful men and women who form the Executive Team. We have grown a great deal in our time together and we have learned to take the best from one another and to nurture each other's strengths. We have argued and debated; we have struggled and we have had both successes and learning opportunities. I have enjoyed getting to know each of you and discovering your particular talents. I have learned much from our work together. It has also been a lot of fun.

I honour also the work of faculty who are the ones most directly responsible for offering the quality of education we do. It is because of the commitment and talent of our faculty that we can even dream of a future in which we offer an increased number of undergraduate and graduate degrees to an increased number of students for the betterment of the country. In the lunches and meetings I have had with students, I have heard many useful criticisms and suggestions about what we need to do better, but I have constantly heard only praise about what happens in our classrooms.

University teaching and research is lonely work, I know. Each day you enter a classroom, you are expected to perform at your best and each evening you go home, you must work on such things as marking and class preparation for tomorrow. I thank you for this work.

I know that you are not happy at the moment and I do not want to gloss over our negotiation challenges. Yet, there will come a day when we will agree, a day of celebration when this too will have passed. For the moment, we must together work through our differences on issues while continuing to treat one another with courtesy and respect. We are colleagues, all of us. For my part, I thank you and honour you for the work you do and invite you to continue to build a great university together.

Faculty without staff could not serve our students. For the work we do to happen, we have relied on the many members of staff who create the conditions for teaching, learning and research to occur. Across this campus, in Grand Bahama and elsewhere, we have committed staff who carry out critical administrative and support functions.

I thank you and I have enjoyed getting to know many of you. I have particularly warm memories of a number of you who went out of your way to complete an innovation, to make an event better, to improve services to our students - Felicity, Kendra, Natasha, Vernice, Italya, Rodman, Rudy, Prestonia, Reggie, Jeannie, Sharon, Calpurnia, Valdez, William, Officer Watkins and so many more I could not name them all.

A university – or a College – is first and foremost a community. A group of men and women who come together to serve a purpose in which each believes. There has been no shortage of purpose and commitment on the part of College faculty and staff and I thank you for this.

We have also been supported by alumni and friends who have, in the past few years, given generously to The College for a variety of important purposes. I have been gratified to see this growth in private giving and enjoin you to continue to make the case that philanthropy is not “begging”. Philanthropy occurs when there is a shared purpose and the will to make a dream come true. I am most grateful to our alumni, our friends and our donors for the faith they have shown in us. We have many dreams to make come true.

I also want to express my deep appreciation of our students. Without their willingness to engage in the hard and rigorous work of College studies, we would not be here and the country would have a poorer future. Our students come from a variety of backgrounds and some go through enormous hardship in their quest to get an education. Many have gone on to other institutions – either through the study abroad programme or after graduation – and have done us proud. They have been our ambassadors and have done well in building our reputation. I thank them.

Finally, I thank my friends, my family and my children for their support of my choices and their generous love. I want to particularly recognize the many gifts I owe to my husband who has been my best friend for over twenty years and whose love has given me courage and strength every day of our life together.

Colleagues, I have been extraordinarily fortunate to have begun my career in The Bahamas and now, to end it here, serving a country and a people I have loved for forty years.

After forty years, I still cannot fly over these islands and look at the vast expanse of turquoise, dotted by islands with mile long pink and white sandy beaches, without a sudden heart tug. I have come to understand this as a moment of pure love. I could not be more grateful.

Thank you.