

FRANKLIN COLLEGE

Inaugural Address

Thomas J. Minar, Ph.D., President

April 9, 2016

To the board of trustees: Thank you for putting the trust of this precious college into my hands. I will provide all I can for this institution and this community, and together we will go far.

I'm so grateful for all you have personally done, Christi, for bringing me here, for welcoming me into the Franklin Community and for all you do to lead this college so well and with such vigor. Your perspectives on the college, the Indianapolis community and Indiana business are very important to me.

In addition to the board chair, I thank the search committee, led by Jim Due and Susan Williams. Each of you from the search committee has served as a greeter for me into this life and I am grateful. Jim and Susan, you are remarkable trustees, and I cannot thank you enough.

John Auld, chair of the President's Committee of the board of trustees, also is deserving of special thanks for his role in my transition. Thank you, John.

Bob DeVoss, chair of the Inauguration Committee, deserves special thanks from all of us. Bob, you have seen the presidency through transition as chair of the transition committee, and through months of planning to be sure that this week would be a suitable celebration for the college. Will you all please join me in thanking Bob DeVoss?

Other members of the Inauguration Committee also deserve our thanks. Members representing all the college's constituencies have been wonderful to give of themselves for this occasion. Thank you.

Finally, Susan Johnson DeVoss and Dan Thomasson today bring special meaning to what has happened here on stage. You represent generations of this college's development, and you represent our very founding. You bring historic legacy for which the community and I are grateful. I'm particularly pleased to have gotten to know the two of you and to gain understanding of your family's legacies here at Franklin and your contemporary personal involvements here. Thank you for being here and for making today special.

Like most new presidents, I am joined today by many family members and friends to whom I am grateful. First, Frank Becker. Frank, you have been stalwart in your support and love. You are a great person, partner and spouse, and I could never be here today without you; I am grateful also for the luster you add to my presidency and to our campus. Thank you, Frank, so much.

Second, my mother, Carola Minar McMullen, who has waited for this moment and cultivated this experience throughout my life, and whose support is endless. It is my mother who taught me to understand that the world can be changed through scholarship, through academe and through education; thanks to her I am also grateful to two academic fathers: To my father, David Minar, who died early, when I was 9, but left the legacy of American political thought that helps me understand Ben Franklin and his context; and to my stepfather, Stewart McMullen, a pragmatic professor of management policy who taught me how to read a financial statement and about resultant decision-making.

Mother, thank you for who you are, for all you've done and for being here.

To my loving brother, stalwart academic of philosophy Ed Minar, I am endlessly grateful for our hours of phone time, sharing our various experiences in our academic settings from college through graduate school and into our various professional roles. It's nice to have a department chair and academic leader on retainer, and you provide excellent therapy and fantastic dog advice.

Stepsister Suse MacDonald, you have always had grounding perspective and different questions about what I do, and I appreciate the creativity you lend our relationship and my life.

To other family, friends – dearly loved ones – who are here or who cannot be here today – you likewise deserve this recognition. Thanks to you who have put up with my quirks, my inquiries, my prodding, my working in a different industry or from a different approach – I have learned from each of you, and you are with me in spirit today. Thank you for your hands of support.

Colleagues: To the cabinet, thank you for your leadership on behalf of this institution. To the distinguished delegates of other institutions and learned societies, thank you for your commitment and your collegueship, a demonstration of the symbiotic nature of institutions in our industry. Distinguished speakers: Professor Erable, Mr. Patz, Miss Brock, Mr. Heuchan, Provost McDonald, I thank you for being here and for your commitment to this institution from inside and out, and to your gracious words about today and your care for our futures together.

Chuck Middleton, I have been blessed by numerous mentors, but as mentor, teacher, friend, you have been endlessly supportive and a role model for so many in higher education. Thank you for who you are, for your kind words, and for all you have done for me. You and Neil Kerwin have brought me here.

To the faculty, your presence here is testimony to your intense commitments to Franklin College and to our futures together. You are wonderful colleagues, but you are also remarkable generators of what we do and no one else can do it this way. Ladies and gentlemen, the faculty of Franklin College.

Marshall Professor Smith, voice of the ceremony Professor Fetter-Harrott, Professor and Director of Choral Activities Hayes and the remarkable musical voices of Franklin College, thank you for making this ceremony possible and giving it this shape. Ladies and gentlemen, join me in thanking our musical talent today.

Now, let's get on with this.

If my speech were titled, it would be "A Boy's Dream." That's because, quite simply, you have fulfilled a boy's dream. But let me share with you why this is a dream. You now know my family background: Largely, or entirely, academic.

Our friends and culture were from higher education; our conversations were about issues of the mind, generally, and of education. And it was all rooted in some very simple beliefs, and beliefs that in many ways were characteristically American but rooted in ancient Greek teaching and philosophy: That people who sought education would find their way, that they would improve themselves, that they would find opportunity and ultimately they would be strong citizens and leaders, improving the world for others.

In many ways, I would not have known what to do if I hadn't had an interest in a career in education and as a social scientist studying American institutions. But our mother has always said, simply, "Of course he wants to be a college president; as a boy he was bounced on the knees of college presidents, provosts, deans ..."

I simply hadn't known anything else, and pursuing leadership roles that would help advance or improve education and institutions was therefore a natural path.

But our family heritage about the value of education is deeper, it goes back further. You remember the famous Benjamin Franklin quote: "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest."¹

¹ Benjamin Franklin, *The Way to Wealth: Ben Franklin on Money and Success*, 1758.

Well, we were raised knowing Ben Franklin as a great uncle – just knowing him as Uncle Ben. I left that family connection out of the interview process, not knowing which way it could throw my candidacy, so today is the first day I've let that slip around here. But Uncle Ben did, indeed, lay the groundwork for my beliefs and heritage with regard to education.

My own understanding of liberal education, of course, had its roots in the same setting: Home.

I was the beneficiary of strong secondary education that also encouraged a pursuit of liberal learning, and I had no question about my own direction: To a liberal arts college. That took me to Pomona College in southern California, one of my best decisions: To study disciplines that would expand my mind, free me in the sense of the meaning of liberal arts and sharpen my critical thought and my capacity to communicate. I have never regretted that decision.

The early '80s, when I was in college, were strangely like today; after the tumultuous economy of the '70s students were focused on education leading to jobs, and many of our classmates were geared toward high-pressure, high-reward industries like consulting, investment banking and law. Others of us were interested in social good and scholarly thought.

I should now thank Pomona classmates who are here today, including a classmate whose commitment to thought, and to good, has improved American education – and we heard from him yesterday as the moderator and commentator at our symposium on liberal education. David Evans, president of Southern Vermont College, is a Pomona classmate and even the hall we lived on together as sophomores can be credited with spawning two college presidents. David, thank you for being here and for being a wonderful colleague and friend.

Now. Let me get onto this great place: Franklin College. Our own history very clearly set our path.

Our college's name was changed in 1844 to "Franklin College" from "Indiana Manual Labor Institute." That's no surprise, given the appeal of "Indiana Manual Labor Institute."

The surprise lies in the simple fact that at the time of renaming the college, the stated objective was "to teach students to think independently ..." and, quoting from our history, "the curriculum accorded with the standards of the best liberal arts colleges of the East ..." The college was indeed founded in 1834, but the college *as we know it* actually dates back to

1844 as a liberal arts college. The college has from its founding valued liberal arts education *and* what was then called “manual labor.” The connection between learning – *liberal learning* – and professional productivity is indeed in our DNA.

Today our faculty honor that legacy of liberal arts and sciences, of training students as thinkers who understand others, who understand method, who understand science, who understand communication. Who can read a theory and test it. Who can ask a critical question, pose it meaningfully, find answers and then communicate those answers. We graduate the critically educated, who will apply their intellectual skill, who will work, who will make a difference, who will do great things.

Those who leave Franklin work hard and are good at their jobs. Time and again I hear from school superintendents, “Send us your trained teachers and athletic trainers; we will hire them.” Countless employers hire their former Franklin interns. And our graduates are creative: they leave their marks on journalism, on Hollywood, on music and art. And impactful: The law, public policy, the academy. And building paths to health and advancement of science: Lab scientists, inventors, physicians, PAs. That’s not enough, though.

I’m concerned that too many around us are worried that the job they get, the career they start here, is the reason for college. They believe they might come here for a job; well, that’s true, but it’s not the end. Statistics show that today’s college graduates might have five, six or seven different jobs or careers. Some of them will in 20 years do jobs that don’t even exist today. As thinkers – liberal artists – our alumni are ready for that. They are capable, remember, of those critical questions, thinking, finding answers, communicating, challenging – they are capable of not just doing a task, of a job, but of reinventing themselves all the time, constantly, to be what they need to be to create success.

So, our students number one are prepared for and get jobs, and number two are prepared for future job markets and changes in whatever industry they choose. But there’s a third thing about what we do at Franklin College. Isn’t it enough just to learn, to want to learn, to be educated, anymore?

What’s wrong with a society where one who follows the human yearning for knowledge isn’t thought well of? What’s wrong with us?

Aren’t the educated more interesting fellow people, fellow workers, colleagues, partners, spouses? Aren’t the educated better citizens because of the capacity they bring to the voting booth, to the board room, to the classroom, to the legislature, to the military? We have to fight for a society that again honors education and indeed honors the educated,

those who quest to improve themselves and build their opportunities through education. And if we don't, no one will.

I have asked our community to think forward – to think about our future and not only how externalities affect us, but how we affect others and the world around us. But also to challenge ourselves as a college community in doing so, to think out of the box, as we say, as a community. But that in turn will demand that each of us gets a little uncomfortable, gets out of our proverbial comfort zones – to work hard, to think hard – in order to determine the strongest future and the strongest path for Franklin College.

Scientist Anil Ananthaswamy nailed it in the mere title of his book *The Edge of Physics*. He made clear what we must do to understand our universe and our future in the *subtitle* of his book: *A Journey to Earth's Extremes to Unlock the Secrets of the Universe*.² That's what I am asking that we as a community do, to journey to our extremes. Go beyond our own boundaries. Get uncomfortable. That is the only thing that will enable us to *Embrace New Dimensions*. Everyone in this community must achieve some level of discomfort in what we're doing, what we're pursuing, or the direction we might go. That will lead us to understand our role as liberal artists, as thinkers and ultimately as innovators defending this form of education and in fact this human condition.

And to ask then how we can best provide liberal arts and sciences education that will enable students to get jobs, have careers, build professions, but also to be smart, to be prepared and eager for the future, to be excellent leaders and good fellow humans because they are educated.

You know I'm a dreamer – remember, “A Boy's Dream.” I'm trying to think outside of our box, to think at the extremes. And let me share with you where our dreams can take us. This is about *my* vision of a liberal arts and sciences college for 2025, maybe, or for 2035. But it radiates from you ... as a community we have identified our common sense of direction and goals for our institution, and here is the dream *you've* helped me weave. So, again, think out 10 or 20 years...

I see Franklin College.

Well, naturally, I see our beautiful campus in the thriving suburb of Franklin, Indiana. I see students walking up and down the mall, admiring their favorite facilities – the science hall that they love so much, updated residence halls where they enjoy living, where they host study groups, where weekend social and learning activity abound.

² Anil Ananthaswamy, *The Edge of Physics: A Journey to Earth's Extremes to Unlock the Secrets of the Universe*, 2010.

They look between buildings and see Faught Stadium, looking forward to the weekend of athletic activity ahead. I see students painting a rock – not painting Ben, but painting an iconic campus rock.

I imagine a campus where our students are immersed in academic activity, led by an excellent faculty, where their classroom experience, each and every time, is linked to an outside learning experience. Where an intense creative writing seminar includes soapbox performance in Nashville. Where biology includes lab experience on campus or in a commercial setting or in Hougham Woods. Where communication students spend time downtown at – you guessed it – The Statehouse File. Where an urban sociology class meets regularly in Indianapolis to be engaged with a changing city, but also includes a visit to, say, St. Louis, to consider the differences in urban ecology between those two cities. Where students, teachers, counselors, across the United States understand that Franklin College offers them the distinction to study in an intense, immersive way that engages them in material and gives them experiences that will change their lives and leads to jobs, careers and professions.

Where those students came here because of the famous “Franklin Plan” for which students map out their curriculum with their faculty adviser when they arrive on campus, drawing changes from time to time in their navigation to their degrees as their interests develop.

That’s all in my dream.

And I see Franklin College, where students come from all backgrounds, where students are of many colors, of many belief systems, from different economic situations and educational experiences. I see a college of radical welcome, where differences are *celebrated*. Where smart, capable people of all ilks come together to change themselves and to develop leadership capacity to contribute to a lively and diverse global society. Where faculty, staff, trustees share the diversity of the student body and model behaviors for all.

That’s all in my dream.

And I see Franklin College, where all in the community are engaged in civic and professional service, committed to changing and improving society.

To being leaders who empower others.

That’s all in my dream.

And I see Franklin College, looked to by the Indianapolis metropolitan area and the state of Indiana as a leader in education and thought. As a place where they can reach for partners, researchers, teachers, interns. A place where nationally and globally we are looked to for intensely and well-trained students, and where our tentacles and outreach to corporate, public affairs, journalistic, educational and other communities are evident and beneficial. I see a college where alumni and friends commit their resources because of the intense experiences they have had here, and because of the distinctive differences that the college makes on young lives.

That's all in my dream.

And I see Franklin College, steward of all with which it has been blessed. A steward of our financial plans and successes, a steward of philanthropy. A steward of our own image and reputation and a steward of how we express our community to others. A steward of God's green earth and of our own campus and our local community. A steward of Franklin, Indiana, Johnson County and the global business center we know this to be. A steward of the talent that commits careers to this college.

That's all in my dream.

But I know it's in your dreams, too – and I am humbled to be here to work with you to understand and facilitate our dreams. I am here because of your talents and treasures and because of the connections between your dreams and mine.

And I promised you that today I would share the five major goals of the draft strategic plan, and there you have them. You just heard them ... They are the pillars of my dream, and of yours. They reflect the historical grounding of our institution and the current beliefs of the college community, and they will push us to work at the edges, and to grow into the future. These are the pillars of the future of our work, they are the pillars of our strategic plan. I will share them with you now:

1. DELIVER A NATIONALLY-RECOGNIZED, INNOVATIVE CURRICULUM IN THE LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES THROUGH IMMERSIVE, ENGAGED LEARNING
2. PREPARE A DIVERSE FRANKLIN COLLEGE COMMUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE ACTIVELY TO A GLOBAL SOCIETY
3. DEVELOP LEADERS THROUGH A CULTURE OF SERVICE AND CIVIC AND PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT
4. ENSURE THE CONNECTION AND THE RELEVANCE OF THE COLLEGE TO OUR LOCAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND GLOBAL COMMUNITIES

5. ENHANCE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY FOR INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Those are the foundations of our plan. Do you see yourselves in that image?

In it, I see a college loved by its students and its alumni, its trustees and its community. Does that sound familiar already?

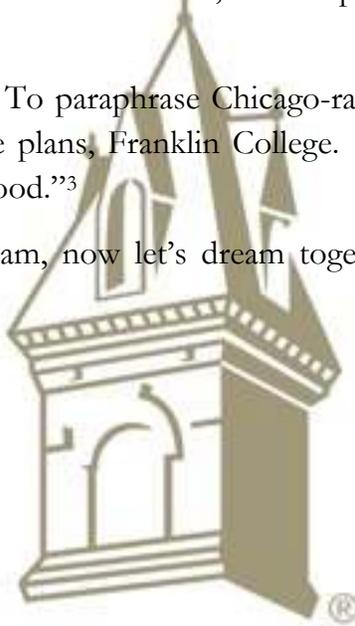
I see a college loved by its faculty and staff, who dedicate themselves to student outcomes and student success. Does that sound familiar?

I hope you now understand that this is where “A Boy’s Dream” meets “An Institution’s Journey.” I am here to meet Franklin College’s quest to improve the lives of hundreds, nay, thousands, of students and alumni, and the people, communities and societies around us.

To you, I close with this: To paraphrase Chicago-raised architect and urban planner Daniel Burnham: Make no little plans, Franklin College. “Make no little plans,” he said, “they have no magic to stir ... blood.”³

You’ve made a boy’s dream, now let’s dream together, and then let’s achieve our dreams.

Thank you.



³ Daniel Burnham, 1907, in Charles Moore, *Daniel H. Burnham, Architect, Planner of Cities. Volume 2*, 1921.