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### *Opening Talk 2003*

*Every human being, every institution has its identity and character. As individuals, we spend a lifetime putting it together...we're in progress until we die and the product is complete. The same is also true of institutions...except that these are not restricted by 80 or 100 years, institutions develop and strengthen their identity over generations and centuries.*

*At opening activities in the past several years I've been telling ONU's story through its people: presidents, board members, faculty and other staff. We've looked at Henry Solomon Lehr's vision and goals for a normal school that developed early (1880s) into the University with the professional schools that we know today. We've looked at the struggles and successes of Presidents Williams and McClure and those who worked with them. We celebrated McIntosh's final realization of North Central Association accreditation and the strategy of completing professional accreditations as a means to that. We've looked at presidents' continuing development work, the rise and decline of student numbers, temporary buildings and building the first dormitories, collaborations with the town of Ada, donors from Stambaugh to Getty.*

*The core feature of our history is that the University was founded to meet student and societal needs: a normal school to improve teaching in the schools; a quarter system (four quarters including the summer) to meet students' varying abilities to attend classes because of family or farm needs; addition of courses and programs to meet local, regional and national professional and student needs. Lehr's focus was on empowerment of the student, having the student actively involved in his/her learning in and out of the classroom. Hence the literary societies and the debating activities. He also focussed on what the University could and did do for the development of Ada, Ohio and the nation. ONU has graduated five U.S. senators, hundreds of judges, officials in presidents' cabinets, mayors and governors, founders of clinics and scholarly magazines, presidents of oil companies, engineers, pharmacists, lawyers, teachers, business leaders, clergy.*

*From the time of Lehr's sale of his University to the United Methodist Church in 1899, the presidents of the University were churchmen, ministers in the Methodist Church. Belt, Smith, Williams, McClure, McIntosh all started out as preachers and local ministers. They came to the University because of the integral relationship of learning and religion that John Wesley had envisioned. Education was ministry and ministry without education was unthinkable.*

*As President McIntosh had decided in 1963 to step down as president in 1965, the Board*

*sought a new president. Appointed to the search committee were Board members, faculty and administrators and alumni. Dr. Harold H. Eibling, superintendent of Columbus schools, was chair; other members were Dr. Herman D. Behrens (A&S Department of Education), Mr. Hugh Staley (Alumni Association), Dr. J. Otis Young (Board chair), Board members Dr. Ralph W. Booker, Bishop Hazen G. Werner, Mr. William Elzay, Dr. J. Lee Whiteman and Dr. Eugene Eakin (vice president for academic affairs). Also actively involved in the recruitment of the new president was John O. Gross, General Secretary of the Division of Higher Education of the Methodist Board of Education who had written Dr. Samuel Meyer in 1964 to ask if he might enter his (Meyer's) nomination for the presidency. At the February 1965 Board meeting attended by the bishops of both the East Ohio and West Ohio conferences along with selection committee members, Dr. Samuel Lewis Meyer was named the seventh president and the first non-pastor president of the University since Henry Solomon Lehr.*

*Dr. Meyer was born November 9, 1906 on a farm near Steinmetz, Missouri. Three years later the family moved to Fayette, Missouri. He earned his A.B. from Central College, Missouri in 1930 and was an instructor in biology at the college for a year following his graduation. He earned his M.S. degree in 1932 from Vanderbilt where he again taught biology as an instructor from 1932-36. In 1936 he became a Dupont research fellow in biology at the University of Virginia. He started work on his Ph.D. at Virginia in 1937, completing the degree in 1940. Following graduation he served as assistant professor of botany at the University of Tennessee, going on leave for military service from 1943-45.*

*After discharge from the army, Meyer joined Emory University as an associate professor of biology. He was recruited back to the University of Tennessee as Professor and Head of the Department of Botany (1946-51), and then moved (1951) to Florida State University. During his tenure at Florida State he was again on leave while serving as Executive Director of the American Institute of Biological Sciences and Executive Secretary of the Division of Biology and Agriculture of the National Research Council in Washington, D.C. From 1954-55, he was Director of the Oceanographic Institute at Florida State.*

*In 1955 Meyer was recruited as dean of his alma mater, Central, now Central Methodist College. In 1958 he was named academic vice president at University of the Pacific in Stockton, California, founded as California Wesleyan College. Throughout his academic career, Meyer had written about education and Methodism and had been active in the Methodist Church. Still the appointment of a layman scholar in biological sciences to the seventh presidency of Ohio Northern University was a new direction for ONU. Coming to ONU Meyer already had the academic robes he needed; University of the Pacific's colors were orange and black. And, except for a dentistry school, ONU had all the programs of University of the Pacific.*

*At Meyer's first meeting with the ONU faculty on September 14, 1965, he stated his presidential goal: academic excellence. As he said that day: "We shall never be satisfied*

*with the mediocre and the second-rate; we shall resist with firmness any attempt to "get-by" with anything less than the best; we shall continue...our dedication to the "pursuit of excellence" in higher education." That day he set out the framework: "teaching of excellence, curricula of excellence, standards of excellence in academic achievement." He placed emphasis first and foremost on student learning: "students learning to think, to relate, to do."*

*Meyer had planned to start as president in September 1965, but in April 1965 Ralph Booker of St. Louis who was vice chair of the Board called him to ask if he could start earlier. The American Council of Pharmacy Education had just removed the college from its list of accredited schools. The ACPE had specific criteria that must be met by the college and university if they were to regain accreditation. Could he help? Meyer had had no inkling of this problem, but agreed to come early. So while McIntosh completed his contract as president, Meyer became the chief administrative officer of the University in July and August 1965.*

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*The accreditation difficulties in the Pharmacy College had been on-going from the early 1960s. Although the college had graduated large numbers of Ohio pharmacists and its graduates had done well on licensure tests, several issues faced the college: the need for a separate pharmacy building with improved facilities, a fully credentialed faculty and increased resources for the program. Responding to ACPE concerns in 1963, President McIntosh had filed an outline of intention for accreditation with that body. The ACPE urged the University to put those intentions into reality. The ACPE's concerns were focussed on the overall academic leadership in the college, an incomplete five year program design and perceived limited financial support for the program. Pharmacy Dean Albert C. Smith had resigned in October 1962 and Dr. C. O. Lee became dean (with the approval of the ACPE) until a new dean could be identified.*

*The ONU Board under impetus from Board Vice Chair Booker formed a pharmacy accreditation committee to assist McIntosh in determining the needs of the college and to assist him with fundraising for it. Those selected for the committee were Board members Mr. John M. Tittle and Mr. E. Joseph Marmon, Bishop Hazen G. Werner, Mr. Harold J. Meredith, Mr. Merrill Insley (Susan Insley's father) and Dr. C. O. Lee.*

*As President McIntosh said at the time:*

*"The easiest thing to have done would have been to accept the proposed revocation of our accreditation and simply let the College of Pharmacy fade into oblivion. Had we done so, we would have started an avalanche which could have swept before it the College of Law, the College of Engineering, and, perhaps, the College of Liberal Arts as well.*

*That we chose not to do; instead we have let this crisis become the turning point in our total programming of the University."*

*McIntosh, the University staff and the Board undertook development of a plan whose overall vision and mission of the University included new buildings for Pharmacy and Engineering, expansion of Taggart Law Library, an expanded facility for Heterick Memorial Library, completion of the University Union, a building for Education, a new Chapel and University archives, additional dormitory and fraternity and sorority spaces, a field house, a new fine arts center, a pool and solarium back of Taft Gym and renovation of existing facilities.*

*McIntosh started implementation of the plan with the College of Pharmacy. He began fundraising activities with the leading pharmaceutical houses in Indianapolis, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland and greater New York. In December 1963, Dr. Robert P. Fischelis was selected as dean of the college by the special pharmacy accreditation committee and Fischelis started his plan for a proposed Continuing Education in the Health Sciences building (now Weber Hall).*

*In May 1964 the Board authorized the University administration to take bids and award contracts for a new College of Pharmacy building "at the earliest possible time." Dr. Fischelis, nationally known in the pharmacy profession, succeeded in obtaining a Pfeiffer Foundation grant for construction of the continuing education building and began to pick a strong faculty for the college. He was charged with meeting all requirements for accreditation. Under his direction the curriculum was reorganized to fit the five year program and financial assistance from ONU's alums began to come in. Plans and specifications for the new College of Pharmacy building were completed, but continued accreditation remained elusive. Fischelis was not able to work with the ACPE toward this goal and, in 1965, stepped down as dean. Finally, in spring 1965 the ACPE removed the college from its list of accredited schools. Thus came the call to Meyer to start his work at ONU.*

*With Meyer on board in October 1965 the ONU Board of Trustees passed a resolution calling on the ACPE to reconsider its spring action of removing the college's accreditation and to grant the college probationary accreditation at its January 1966 meeting. In its resolution the Board noted that Dr. Leroy D. Beltz had been selected as permanent Pharmacy dean to replace Dr. Fischelis and that the Robertson-Evans Pharmacy Building was under construction and would be completed in 1966. That petition by the Board was successful and at the ONU Board meeting of February 5, 1966, it was announced that the college had been returned to the list of accredited colleges. With the completion of the Pharmacy Building and with Dean Beltz' leadership, a new era began for the pharmacy college. Although the college was moved from probationary accreditation to full accreditation only in 1970, ONU graduates continued to take and pass the Boards and to play an important role in the pharmacy profession in the state and nation.*

*Seven hundred people attended the dedication of the Pharmacy building in October 1966. Among these were all the former living deans (Raabe, Smith, Lee, Fischelis) along with Dean Beltz and the president of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy. At a community open house, Dean Rudolph Raabe (for whom the college is named) recalled his 45 years with the college, 34 of them as dean.*

*Today the pharmacy college stands out as ONU's college with, perhaps, the best regional and even national reputation. The college has a strong and successful continuing education program. A few years ago college faculty members completely redid the curriculum for the doctor of pharmacy degree and established modular courses that help students synthesize knowledge in the fourth and fifth year didactic courses. An innovative experiential program has been established. Yearly the college successfully brings in the highest number of external grants. Some faculty members are known nationally for their research and student research continues to grow and be strengthened. Graduates hold positions of importance in pharmacy associations and in the pharmacy industry. The college set up the first ONU on-line didactic program with its non-traditional doctor of pharmacy program. The assessment of student learning is integrated into on-going course evaluations that result in changes to assist student learning. If the ONU Board of Trustees and the president of the University had not chosen to fight to keep the college, none of that would be here today.*

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*When President Meyer moved to Ada he brought energy and fundraising talent to the University along with a clear vision for ONU. Although the Pharmacy College and its building were his first priorities when he arrived, Meyer wanted an appropriate, centrally placed library and a chapel as the linch pins of the institution.*

*Heterick Library was constructed in the center of campus in 1968 and Wesley Center, the chapel, in 1970. A new Engineering building was completed in 1971. Prior to that construction, the Basic Sciences Building (now Meyer Hall) was constructed (1968). Additions were made to McIntosh Center in 1967 and a Founders Hall addition was completed in 1966 along with Brookhart Hall (1966). Law, King Horn and the Art buildings were soon to be built.*

*Meyer, however, was more than a builder and fundraiser. He was committed to the development of strong academic programs, to developing appropriate policies for students and faculty alike, with their consultation. And if he could get angry in a faculty meeting or in a meeting with students and slowly turn red and occasionally pound the podium or his desk, he did not hold a grudge. During his tenure as president clearer rules for promotion and tenure were set; the TIAA/CREF retirement program was advanced; guidelines for Board members were established; official University policies from non-discrimination to affirmative action were established and implemented and during his presidency the Board*

*approved a student/faculty/Board joint document: "The Academic Rights, Freedoms, and Responsibilities of Students at Ohio Northern University."*

*Meyer brought national speakers to campus for ONU commencements and dedications. The most nationally well-known was Chaplain Udy's classmate, Martin Luther King, who spoke in January 1968. Writing later of King's visit and the period of the 60s, Meyer said: "While other colleges were scenes of disruption, ONU invited and welcomed Nobel Prize Winner, Dr. Martin Luther King to campus where he spoke to an overflow audience. Taft Gym was filled to capacity and another 500 persons in Lehr Auditorium listened to the talk relayed by the P.A. system."*

*Meyer's was the impetus for the honoraries that populate the campus today. Both he and his wife, Martha, were Phi Beta Kappas. ODK, Omicron Delta Kappa; honoraries in history, English, social work, French, Spanish, engineering, pharmacy, biology came to campus. He raised funds for student scholarships; he helped develop the first endowed chairs for faculty. During his twelve years as president the academic programs were revised, expanded and strengthened.*

*In 1975 Meyer made his alumni rounds talking about the four freedoms for Northern. Drawing his inspiration from Franklin Roosevelt's four freedoms (freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, freedom from fear), Meyer called his freedoms, "reasonable expectations" for the University. These were:*

*Freedom from mediocre facilities*

*Freedom from debt*

*Freedom from a controlling dependence on student tuition*

*Freedom from a compromise of sacred purpose*

*As you can see, we are still working on those freedoms. Meyer's portrait of the last freedom was the following:*

*"an absolutely resolute and dedicated person; male or female; black, white or yellow or brown or red; Jew or Christian or Moslem or Buddhist striding swiftly and straight ahead to a well-defined goal---called of God and responding to that call---one who will not be turned aside---one who will not compromise a destiny with eternity."*

*ONU's recently revised and updated plans, the Master Plan update completed in 2000, and ONU's strategic plan completed in 2002 come from the traditions of previous presidents who each built on the progress of those before them.*

*Meyer's own iteration of ONU's mission statement was close to ONU's mission statement today:*

*"Ohio Northern University, a United Methodist-related institution of higher learning, seeks to educate and graduate students accomplished in scholastic achievement, prepared for a useful life and meaningful career, and inspired with a desire to contribute to the good of humankind consistent with Judeo-Christian ideals.*

*Ohio Northern's purpose is to help develop students into self-reliant mature men and women open to dealing with the contemporary world, actively involved in their learning, capable of clear and logical thinking and sensitive to the higher values of beauty, truth and goodness.*

*In keeping with these goals, students will study diverse ideas and influences and develop technology skills appropriate to the needs of an ever-changing world. The University's academic program includes mutually supportive liberal and professional education components and integrates practice with theory and provides students with opportunities for research, internships, co-op and international study and work."*

*It was Sam Meyer who in February 1967 introduced ONU's Board approved motto: **ex diversitate vires**, from diversity, strength. Meyer saw the diversity of ONU's colleges providing "intellectual contacts of faculty and students in widely divergent disciplines in a closely knit academic community." That concept of strength out of diversity continued to expand and included diversity of thought, diversity of cultures, of ethnic and cultural origins.*

*President Meyer would be equally at home with ONU's 2002 vision statement:*

*"Ohio Northern University will be a leading, private, student-centered institution of increasing regional and national prominence. It will be a diverse, dynamic and unique learning community offering rigorous professional programs in partnership with the arts and the sciences to prepare individuals for lifelong challenges in the 21st century."*

*He would also like ONU's 2002 stated commitments:*

*"Ohio Northern is a student-centered, service-oriented, values-based institution of higher learning committed to the rigorous pursuit of academic inquiry and achievement."*

*Finally he would concur with ONU's articulated values:*

*Excellence (isn't that what he started with?)  
Innovation  
Technology  
Diversity  
Its People*

*In his last words to the Board of Trustees before retirement, Sam Meyer talked about the future of the University and (with an Olympic reference) a torch. He told the trustees that the University needed to think beyond survival, that it should "focus on the needs of society and how Ohio Northern University can serve to meet those needs. After all," he said, "that is exactly what Henry Solomon Lehr did 106 years ago in conceiving and building and guiding a university to meet needs specific to the day and place in which he lived." Meyer gave advice about educational policy (making liberal education more meaningful in the curricula, having future directions in curricula stem from the unique mix of programs and colleges, increasing cooperation among the diverse colleges) and developing resources to attract good students and faculty. Meyer told his Board friends that they must renew their commitments to the mission, values and goals of the University. "Tis the torch that people follow," Meyer thundered as he closed, "whoever the bearer may be."*

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