

## **Inauguration Address of President Mary J.C. Hendrix 16th President of Shepherd University**

Thank you, Chancellor Hill and Dr. Brand, and the Board of Governors, for conferring investiture and for your confidence in my ability to advance Shepherd University to the next level of preeminence. I would like to express my sincere appreciation for this extraordinary honor. Thank you to everyone who joined us today for this special celebration.

We are profoundly influenced by our environment, our family, our friends, and our colleagues. As a proud Alum, I am extremely grateful to Shepherd for giving me a solid liberal arts education – delivered by dedicated faculty and caring staff, and enhanced by a supportive community. By example, Shepherd allowed me to develop two important attributes that have guided my professional demeanor throughout my career: Service before self and excellence without arrogance. During these financially challenging times that our beautiful state is experiencing, which has adversely impacted our wonderful university, I feel a tremendous call to duty to return home and work tirelessly with all of you to advance our educational mission. I can think of no greater responsibility than to secure the appropriate resources necessary to train the next generation of leaders, innovators and model citizens. Our students and their families expect us to provide a nurturing environment, an excellent education, and promising career prospects. Although we face financial challenges, we cannot have a lack of aspiration, and we must continue to do everything possible to provide our students with the opportunities to succeed.

How will this be possible at Shepherd, which receives only 16% of their budget from the state of West Virginia? The only way forward, my friends, is with public-private partnerships, creative networking, and new collaborations. Our community is anxious and willing to help us succeed. They are dedicated to offering new apprentice programs for our students – so they can experience working environments before making career commitments. Generous donors are coming forward to provide new scholarships, support innovative educational programs, and strategize about new facilities. Shepherd should be viewed as a valuable resource for the community and the state – in education, technology, and intellectual capital. Mayor Auxer says “Shepherdstown is the hub of history,” and we must preserve the knowledge associated with this distinction.

Leading by example, we launched an exciting inauguration symposium today, entitled “The University’s Role in Translating Energy Challenges into Business and Employment Opportunities.” We heard from Mr. Michael Polsky of Chicago, the Founder and President of Invenergy, and a pioneer in the energy industry. He emphasized the important role academic institutions play in developing and commercializing new energy technologies, and he announced the creation of the Invenergy-Shepherd University Beech Ridge Internship Program that will fund one of our students every summer for a paid internship at the sustainable energy Beech Ridge project.

We also heard from Dr. Xingbo Liu, Professor of the Statler College of Engineering and Mineral Resources at West Virginia University, and an expert in the space of innovative battery storage of sustainable energy.

From Shepherd University, we heard from Dr. Jeff Groff, Associate Professor of Physics in the Institute of Environmental and Physical Sciences, who has designed and built a sustainable energy system for his home.

This type of collaborative partnership can lead to new training opportunities for our students, in addition to important employment prospects. An academic institution like Shepherd should serve as a financial catalyst for the community—bringing in new technology and addressing issues of importance together. My goal is to promote Shepherd as a valuable resource for West Virginia in new technologies and educational programs.

Today is a very special day for many reasons. April 8th marks the birthday of my Father, Charles Nelson Grant Hendrix, a World War II hero. He was instrumental in initiating the Oceanography Department at the United States Naval Academy, where he proudly taught and mentored many notable students. With us today is Captain Emil Petruncio, Chairman of the Oceanography Department at the Naval Academy. Some of my Father's former students and Trident Scholars have joined us as well: The Honorable Jay Cohen, Retired Admiral and former Under Secretary for Science and Technology in the Department of Homeland Security; Dr. Linton Wells, former Director of the Center for Technology & National Security Policy; and Retired Captains Michael Rader and Jim Etro. My Father commuted daily to the Naval Academy so that my Mother and I could enjoy living in Shepherdstown, where Mother worked at Shepherd for over 30 years as a secretary, and I had the privilege of attending this remarkable institution.

Also in the audience today are childhood friends, college and professional colleagues, and two very special national philanthropic leaders:

Ann Lurie is one of these special leaders, and among her many philanthropic projects, I wish to highlight the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, one of the top ten children's hospitals in the United States. I would also like to acknowledge the second philanthropic leader, Fern Lentini Manne, who recently dedicated the Stanley Manne Children's Research Institute of Lurie Children's Hospital and Northwestern University, which supports research addressing pediatric diseases, which in many cases, are the precursors to adult diseases. I would like to recognize Mr. Malcolm Kamin for his many years of service on the Manne Research Institute Board. I extend special gratitude to my academic colleagues and collaborators who traveled a considerable distance to join us for this occasion: In addition to Dr. Axel Ruprecht from the University of Iowa and Dr. Charles Little from Kansas University – who both marched in our procession, I thank Erin Shields, Dr. Jay Walsh and Ann Adams from Lurie Children's and Northwestern University, Dr. Ray Hohl from Penn State, Dr. Suresh Mohla from the NCI, and Dr. Howard Garrison from FASEB.

With your indulgence, I would like to share a brief highlight noting what a small and wonderful world we live in by acknowledging a young woman, Heather Barth, who will join us tomorrow at the ice cream social with her service dog Joplin. I was drawn to Heather a few years ago when I saw her and her service dog working at the Jefferson Security Bank in Shepherdstown, and I wanted to know more about her. She told me about a remarkable physician scientist in Chicago who had diagnosed and treated her rare condition, and, as it turns out, that physician scientist is a close friend and colleague at Lurie Children's Hospital, Dr. Debbie Weese-Mayer, who joined us today, and serves as Chief of the Center for Autonomic Medicine in Pediatrics. Without a doubt, we have all touched each other's lives in innumerable ways.

In closing, please know that we at Shepherd consider it a privilege to share knowledge to train the next generation. This is a sacred responsibility that shapes our future and creates our legacy, and we have an extraordinary faculty to implement our theme of excellence. Especially noteworthy is the 2015 West Virginia Professor of the Year, Sonya Evanisko, Professor of Art, and as our Provost Dr. Ames stated, "she

is the heart of Shepherd's studio art program." Equally noteworthy, Sonya is one of five Shepherd University winners of this prestigious award since its inception in 1985. We could not be more proud!

Shepherd gave me a wonderful academic foundation, and I have dedicated my career to cancer research. It is so appropriate that immediately following this ceremony, we are all invited to participate in the Relay for Life Torch Lighting ceremony on the Butcher Center Plaza – organized by our outstanding students – to celebrate the lives of cancer survivors and remember those who have gone before us. We embrace the students' chosen theme of "There's no place like hope."

A special thank you to our hard working inauguration planning committee, our President Jim Staley, our faculty, staff, students, and community members, and to all of you for attending today and making this event truly memorable.