

**Investiture Ceremony Remarks**  
**President Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D.**  
**September 21, 2013**  
**Ferrell Hall Auditorium**  
**9:00 a.m.**

Chancellor Hill and Chair Susman, thank you. I will hold these items sacred as a symbol of the institution and the importance of the position you have entrusted to me. I pledge to uphold the integrity and mission of this Great Institution throughout my presidency.

First of all...join me in giving Dr. Johnetta Cross Brazzell another round of applause. I thank you for stalking me in that hallway in 2001. In part, I stand here today because of that single question, "Are you happy in your current position?"

I would like to take a moment to recognize several very important individuals who are here today and are critical to this University and the future of our state.

Could all of the legislative leaders and Governor's appointees please stand? Please join me in a round of applause for these leaders.

I would also be remiss if I did not recognize my bosses, members of the Board of Governors for West Virginia State University. Please stand and be recognized.

To my mentors, John, who could not be with us today, Johnetta, Eddie, Theresa, and Kathy, thank you for all of your support, the sink or swim opportunities, and the occasional swift kick throughout the last two decades that I am sure I deserved.

I also thank you for teaching me about accountability and expectations. I have very high expectations for myself, but if I send you an e-mail at 4:00 a.m., please do not feel the need to respond until an acceptable hour. That is a nasty habit from my former president, John Peters.

All joking aside, to my mentors, I thank you and I love each of you.

To my former cabinet, Brandi, John, and Angie, thank you for your hard work over the years, friendship, and words of wisdom. I am so proud of each of you...with two of you being vice presidents and one on you on the way to your first vice presidency.

I must thank my family...the Wilkins, Hemphills, and the Rosas for your prayers and love. Please stand!

To my wife and my rock, Dr. Marisela Rosas Hemphill, thank you. Thank you for believing in me, loving me, supporting me, and enthusiastically accompanying me on this wild and wonderful journey.

To my children, Jada, Jordan, Catalina, and Cruz, please know how proud I am of each of you. It is a joy and a privilege to have the pleasure each day to be your father. I love all of you!

To the platform party – including our distinguished speakers, Secretary Kay Goodwin, Dr. Bruce Berry, WVSU President’s Cabinet – as well as delegates who have joined us from across the state and nation and the special guests who have filled the audience. Good morning and thank you for being here today!

I am honored and humbled to have an opportunity to stand before you as the 10<sup>th</sup> President of West Virginia State University. Today is a day to reflect. A day to reflect on and celebrate the rich academic traditions and the proud history of WVSU. A day to look with hopeful eyes to the promise of change and a prosperous future for this Great University. From the time my family and I arrived on campus, we have been embraced by smiling faces and open arms. The students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends of the University have provided a constant support system as we have navigated the past year both personally and professionally.

I never dreamed that I would find such a beautiful place to call home and a safe community to raise my family. The mountains of West Virginia are majestic, but it is the people that have captured my heart and the hearts of my family.

With strong support from the entire State family, I cannot adequately express what it means to be the President of OUR University.

Board of Governors member and my dear friend Gary Swingle recently asked me why it took more than a year for us to all come together here today to formally and officially mark my presidency.

To Mr. Swingle and others who have posed or pondered that same question, it took that amount of time to ensure that the Board of Governors, faculty, and staff were going to keep me!

When we began this journey together on July 1, 2012, we made a commitment. A commitment to excellence, accountability, and being student centered in our daily actions. We also embraced the mantra of ‘One Message, Many Voices’. This commitment and mantra holds remarkable importance as we consider the challenges ahead.

As we reflect on the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of our Great State, we must develop and articulate goals that allow us to further the workforce and gain economic prosperity for the next 150 years.

In the coming years, we will witness significant changes across business and industry and at all levels of education. Policymakers and educators must be prepared to focus time and energy on meeting ever changing demands, especially in the growing areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

The United States continues to lag behind industrial countries around the world in STEM education. When the numbers are examined, it is a narrowing pipeline from kindergarten to baccalaureate education.

As a land-grant institution engaged in outreach and research at all levels, we know it is critical to engage young people in K–12 with initiatives that launch leaders into emerging STEM programs. This sets the stage to attract students who are prepared to matriculate successfully into our higher education institutions, to retain them with involvement in hands-on experiences, and to produce more degree holders to meet projected workforce demands.

WVSU has already begun to make strides in this area through investments from corporate partners in our University, but we must do more in the years ahead to ensure that we have the scientists and the innovators who foster creativity and drive our economy to higher levels of promise and prosperity.

In the realm of higher education, access and opportunity for all West Virginians is key to this promise, regardless of race, creed, color or economic background. Access must remain a top priority. No one should be denied an education based on affordability.

An education is priceless, because one's ability to learn and adapt never ends. Learning is, indeed, a lifetime pursuit and one that should not be taken lightly.

Our universities are not only learning centers, but also economic engines for this state. It is important that we acknowledge their impact on the growth of the local, regional, and state economy.

When we commit to do all we can, which the State family has proudly pledged to do, collectively we can bridge the knowledge and skills gap and provide new opportunities for our students and our citizens.

We must also remain mindful that the delivery of higher education will be vastly different decades from now. Universities that remain ahead of the curve by analyzing trends and matching delivery systems to the ways in which our student audiences are receptive.....will be the prosperous universities of the future! There is one promise I make as I stand on this stage before you today.....WVSU will be among this group of universities!

Future generations of students will be wired for learning in today's technological world. They will learn in new and different ways that many of us are not accustomed to and frankly ways that have not even been created yet. We will need to modify the traditional classroom format to captivate the minds and ensure the successes of these future learners.

For West Virginia to continue to prosper, I encourage us to do the following: Invest in our people. Invest in our future generations. These are the individuals who will shape, define, and redefine what West Virginia will look like in the years to come.

We must, as a state, continue to invest in higher education so that it remains an affordable option to those who want to better themselves, and in turn become that productive citizen leader, who will help lead this state!

At WVSU, I can ensure you that we are committed to preparing for the future. As we invest in providing robust, quality experiences for our young people right here on our campus, the Great State of West Virginia will reap the rewards long into the future.

With continued collaboration from those of us in this room and members of the State family who could not be with us today, we will bring to life our vision of becoming the most student-centered, research and teaching, land-grant University in the state of West Virginia, and beyond.

How will we accomplish this?

Through our commitment to:

1. RECRUITMENT
2. RETENTION AND DEGREE COMPLETION
3. REBRANDING AND MARKETING
4. RESEARCH GROWTH
5. ENHANCING AND EXPANDING OUR ACADEMIC OFFERINGS
6. ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT AND PHILANTHROPIC GIVING
7. AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE CAMPUS INFRASTRUCTURE

we will move this University forward.

As I have said over the past year, “If we don’t tell our story, someone else will tell it for us.” I am proud to have an opportunity every day to tell our story. Many of the individuals I have spoken with have not previously heard our story, but welcome an opportunity to learn about our rich history and be part of our exciting future.

Our story of this past year is one of forward-looking! Each and every person in this room and across campus should be proud...very proud of all that has been accomplished.

In the past year, the State family made history. WVSU has experienced historic growth in terms of fundraising, infrastructure improvements such as Fleming Hall as well as technology and classroom upgrades, the new residence hall, which we broke ground on yesterday, and a significant increase in the first-time, full-time freshmen for Fall 2013. Not only did the class increase, but the academic profile also improved as well.

Could all of the faculty and staff please stand. You accomplished each of the aforementioned successes. For that, I applaud you.

Although these efforts are significant and have made an impact on our campus, we must constantly look to the future so that we may continue to build on these milestones. This is just the beginning folks!

We must, each and every day, strive to conquer greater challenges and bring the initiatives we have begun, like the new residence hall, to reality.

I know that by working together we can continue to take West Virginia State University to new heights by embracing and celebrating our legacy and, more importantly, working together to create our future and define our destiny!

A future that will make a difference for the Kanawha Valley, the state of West Virginia, and the students who come to our campus with a thirst for learning and a dream of a better tomorrow.

Ladies and gentlemen, the students are why we are here today. They are why I am standing here as your President.

Their hope and their future is what drives me every day. To work harder. To make a difference. To push myself beyond the expectations that others have for me and the expectations that I have for myself.

The enormity of the trust you have instilled in me is my constant companion (along with my wife). It is present in every action and every decision that I make on behalf of the University. I promise to serve this University and guide this University with pride and passion.

I pledge to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of President each and every day to the best of my ability.

I make this pledge today in front of those who have entrusted me with the future of WVSU!!!

Thank you, God bless, and GO STATE!