

Opening all faculty staff remarks August 21, 2008

It's a distinct pleasure for me to be standing here once again as we begin the 2008-2009 school year. Often I'm called upon to speak before groups where I don't know most of the attendees, but on a night like tonight I speak to you as a group of employees who have the perspective of six years of shared experience.

In my early years here, I was the learner trying to understand the workings and ethos of the Academy. More recently I have been working with you to solve problems as we bring the school to ever greater levels of recognition and leadership, to make decisions of importance as they affect our entire community, and finally to serve as the visible leader for an organization that is well on its way in reaching its stated goal of achieving greatness. I know I also speak for my wife Shirley who has been a tireless supporter of the Academy, working behind the scenes in so many ways that are unrecognized.

I am especially pleased to make these short remarks tonight because we have accomplished so much together that it is only appropriate that we congratulate ourselves for work done well, while at the same time rededicating ourselves to the continued task of moving from "Good to Great."

As many of you probably have been doing over the last week or so, I have spent a reasonable amount of time watching the Olympic Games. Fascinating drama, isn't it? Definitely reality television as competitors in the clichéd phrase either experience the thrill of victory or the agony of defeat. I have watched events I have never watched before and don't even care much about because I am drawn to the human drama that lies behind each event. I'm sure you, as I, recognize that these athletes endure years of preparation for a few minutes (sometimes only a few seconds) of competition. We watch these competitions and we appreciate the amazing talent, stamina, drive, and ambition of every athlete. I think we are also taken by the overt pride they exhibit in representing their country.

In many ways, participation in these games is not all that different from engagement in work at the Academy. Certainly, the element of pride for our school that I see in each and every one of you every day is no less deep than those athletes' pride in their country. As we continue to improve the school, I truly believe that your pride in the Academy will grow to levels you never thought possible.

I think you can all take pride in our many accomplishments such as creating a beautiful, as well as intellectually stimulating, environment. There are few schools in New England with the pure physical beauty of the Academy. Nary a visitor fails to make mention of this fact. Your continued attention to the state of our grounds, our buildings, our dormitories, and our classrooms, has been instrumental for this outcome.

Just as Olympic athletes can only be successful if they have a certain fire in their bellies, so too we, the employees of the Academy, have the drive and determination to bring new levels of recognition to the Academy. We currently compete for students with some of

the best schools in the country. The reason we are attractive to so many quality applicants is that there is positive word of mouth both among applicants as well as consultants that Wilbraham & Monson Academy is a high-quality school. Positive word of mouth comes from the successful experiences of students. And successful student experience comes from their interaction with you. You provide the experience. You make possible a strong, lifelong and transformational relationship. Just as athletes are transformed by their experiences as an Olympian, students at the Academy are transformed via their relationships with you.

What Olympic athletes have in great supply is their ability to endure long periods of delayed gratification. Four years of blood, sweat, and tears must be endured before the glory of the games can be experienced. We too have had a high tolerance for delayed gratification. We have had disappointments in our history that would have torn apart lesser institutions. But our character as a community, committed to the premise that we will prevail in our quest for greatness, served us well. We shrugged off difficulty and pushed on with the tasks that needed to be done. Now, we are beginning to see the fruits of this determination.

In a few short weeks we will have a set of the finest fields ever at the school. By the end of the fall term we will have a new educational facility, the Mark Shenkman Trading Center, that will be a first for an American high school. By the end of next summer we will have several new faculty dwellings on campus. Who knows what the coming year has in store for us in the continued development of our school. All I know is that the sky is the limit.

In closing, I want to emphasize once more that it is a distinct pleasure to work with every one of you. I am proud to lead the Academy and to spend my time doing all that I can to help us reach our goal of great education for our students. In my estimation, we are poised, after six years of buildup, for tremendous breakthrough. Let us all have a great year in 2008-2009. Keep up your good work. Stay focused on doing what you do with excellence. Remember that everything we do well brings us one step further toward our goal.

Clearly, we are on our way to the top of the award podium and the gold medals will be ours to savor.