

**Installation Address**  
**Elaine P. Maimon, Ph.D.**  
**November 3, 2007**

Many thanks to you, Lorine, and to all the trustees. Delegates, distinguished guests, students, trustees, faculty, staff, and friends of Governors State, I am proud to stand before you as the fifth president of Governors State University. We come together to celebrate successes of almost 40 years of pragmatic idealism and to envision the exceptional promise of the future.

Many thanks to the multitude of volunteers who worked on this ceremony and on this week of academic activities. Although he asked not to be singled out, I want to give particular recognition to the Chair of the Installation Committee, Acting Vice President of Institutional Advancement and Dean, William Nowlin. His leadership, in the true GSU spirit, has motivated many people to work as one.

On a personal note, I am deeply grateful to share this moment with my husband and life-partner, Dr. Mort Maimon. Our daughter, Gillian, an elementary school teacher in Philadelphia, comes here without missing any class time. Our son, Alan, a special projects reporter for the Las Vegas Review Journal, has brought his journalistic eye to Illinois - not to be distracted by our three grandchildren, Dasia, Madison, and Annabelle Elaine. Thanks to Alan and Angie for bringing these darling three sisters to participate today. Special thanks to friends and colleagues who have traveled from across this glorious nation from: Alaska, Arizona, California, Indiana, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Washington, DC.

The pageant of universities is inspiring. GSU takes its place among the world's most respected educational institutions. This procession connects GSU to the tradition of Veritas--the search for truth, freely engaged in, without fear or prejudice.

The procession also connects the elements of my personal career, begun in private higher education - Haverford College, Arcadia University, Brown University - to public

institutions - Queens College, Arizona State University, University of Alaska Anchorage, Governors State University - from the East Coast to the Southwest; from Alaska, the Great Land, to Illinois in the Heartland.

Chicagoland - I love that name. It conveys a special, shared sense of civic pride. Connected by rail lines and commercial networks, the entire region shares in the "Chicago spirit."

Chicagoland is home territory to the phoenix - that magic bird consumed by fire and then reborn from its own ashes. GSU's student newspaper is called the Phoenix. On campus, we enjoy the Edvins Strautmanis sculpture, entitled "Phoenix," as the brochure says, framing "the sun which, like its namesake, dies in its flames only to reemerge." After the Great Fire of 1871, Chicago emerged from the ashes to lead the country in commerce, manufacturing, and architecture. The city skyline was reborn with the first skyscrapers.

GSU's history of service to returning adult students also celebrates the phoenix because our students exemplify renewal and reinvention of self.

Renewal and reinvention - that's what education always should be about. That's what the twenty-first century MUST be about.

The purpose of an installation is to remember the past, reflect on the present, and imagine the future.

As T. S. Eliot writes in *The Four Quartets*:

"Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future."

Let us look at GSU's origins and ideals. Let us ask where we have succeeded and where we have gone astray. Let us examine what should be sustained and what should be transformed. Then, phoenix-like, we will renew and reinvent GSU.

First, let us remember.

Remembering is an act of imagination. We select and reconstruct the past into stories that inspire the future. Anthropologist Dell Hymes says, “A community is defined as a group of people who know the same stories.” And, I would add, therefore, share the same past.

Although Governors State University was not founded until 1969, our university is rooted in the post-World War II era. In the late nineteen-forties, thousands of service women and men returned home to Illinois, to the rapidly expanding Chicago metropolitan area.

After defeating tyranny, these veterans - regardless of socio-economic group - yearned for the American Dream and the “the pursuit of happiness.” And they got the chance.

The GI Bill of Rights, the twentieth century’s most significant public policy initiative, opened doors to higher education, just as the Morrill Act - the Land Grant College Act - enacted in 1862, and signed by Illinois’ own Abraham Lincoln, had vastly increased opportunities in the preceding century.

After World War II, GI’s who had shipped out from farms and factories returned to unprecedented opportunities for upward mobility. The dream of university education and a home of their own was within their reach.

Here, on this very spot, amid the cornfields and lakes of the Illinois Heartland, Nathan Manilow, a builder in every sense of the word, imagined a new town—one that would be free of the covenants that restricted other Chicago-area neighborhoods only to “the right people.” This new town would be characterized by diversity and affordability. It would include a forest preserve, a new commuter rail terminal, and a great university.

And here we are today in University Park, surrounded by a forest preserve, at the terminus of the Metra line that runs directly from Michigan Avenue and Millennium Park. Starting in 1969, we have collectively been building a great university, imagined as

the people's university. Reconciling greatness - high standards - with openness has been the major challenge for GSU, and for American higher education as a whole.

Nathan Manilow's son, Lewis, continued his father's dream, combining it with his own vision of infusing daily living with art. Lewis Manilow, builder, philanthropist, art collector, and GSU honorary degree recipient, is with us today. Please join me in recognizing Lew Manilow and his family of builders.

The new town of University Park is distinctive because Governors State, its great people's university, arises from a foundation of artistic expression - imagination set free. Mark di Suvero's *Yes! For Lady Day* was constructed here before ground was broken for the university. Art - sculpture - at GSU is not an afterthought. Art is essential to the identity of this campus. Public art belongs at all universities because artists teach us to look at the ordinary with new eyes. You may like or loathe *Paul*, the monumental statue of a slumped Paul Bunyan. But, here at the university, we can talk about *Paul* in terms of mythos, advertising, and new artistic materials.

Just as art helps us see life anew, one benefit of new presidential leadership is to look at the university with a newcomer's eye - an artist's eye - to see the university's past, present, and future anew.

The presidential administration of William E. Engbretson, from 1969 to 1976, established the founding concepts of Governors State University. July 1969, the month of the first moon landing, was also the month that Governor Richard Ogilvie signed the statute establishing GSU.

The GSU logo symbolizes flight - to the moon and, metaphorically, to new heights of achievement and upward mobility. The three sides of the triangular shape forming not so much a triangle, but a wing - represent the tri-partite role for faculty: teaching, scholarship, and service. GSU's colors, black and white, affirm that GSU was imagined

as an oasis, transcending the turmoil of the late sixties, and uniting people across racial lines.

Dr. Engbretson, the University's first builder, established GSU as a non-traditional, experimenting university, with a mission to serve adult learners and community college transfer students. GSU was founded on the principle of partnership with community colleges. In that spirit, I ask our partners - the presidents and other representatives from Illinois community colleges, to rise and be recognized.

Dr. Engbretson worked with Lewis Manilow to make GSU a gathering place for sculptors, from Chicagoland and beyond. In 1976, GSU hosted a monumental sculpture exhibition, entitled, *The Sculptor, The Campus, and The Prairie*. Peter Schjeldahl, still an art critic for the *New Yorker*, wrote about the exhibit in 1976:

“The train ride south from the Loop to University Park gets dramatic toward the end of the line. Dense habitation ceases abruptly, and the almighty American prairie, always underfoot in Chicago but usually out of mind, emerges like a conquering god.”

Schjeldahl intuitively understood something essential about Governors State's unique integration of art, education, and nature. Works of sculpture in the exhibition were created from materials of industrial society. President Engbretson said that these works expressed a “thoroughly contemporary, exuberant, indomitable, even defiant human spirit.” That defiant human spirit civilizes the prairie and, simultaneously, finds beauty in industrial materials usually associated with machines. Governors State University, the site for this encounter, becomes sacred ground, where nature and civilization meet.

The integration of public art with the university symbolically defines what I call the University as Public Square: a place inspiring engagement with the aspirational values of our diverse cultures; a place where the city and nature meet; a place where education is a life-long process in a publicly shared environment.

Examine the architecture and setting of many universities here and in Europe. These institutions look like Gothic Cathedrals or monasteries and are built on hills. The idea was to create an isolated environment apart from and above society for the purpose of preparing a ruling class. Realize now that in a democratic society, we are ALL members of the ruling class. Here universities cannot be gated communities for the elite; they must be Public Squares inviting talented individuals, regardless of socio-economics or family heritage, to discover new ideas.

In ancient Greece, the Public Square was called the agora, where Socrates walked with students and taught them to be leaders in the city. The Romans' Public Square was the Forum, where Cicero inspired young Romans to understand responsibilities of citizenship. Governors State, from its beginning, has reconciled nature - the prairie god - with the values of civilization - art and education, creating a Public Square, inviting people from all classes of society to participate in responsible public life.

Dr. Leo Goodman-Malamuth, the second president from 1976 to 1992, strengthened GSU's role as a Public Square. Wisely, he reflected on excesses of the late sixties, while sustaining the spirit of thoughtful innovation. He recognized that "classes without walls" may be a good metaphor but in actuality students need more structure - and better acoustics - to hear themselves think and to learn. Dr. Goodman-Malamuth harnessed the prairie god's potential by imposing necessary constraints and developing sound educational practices.

Paula Wolff assumed the presidency of GSU in July 1992 and served until 2000. President Wolff, a true pragmatic idealist, furthered and refined GSU's distinctive mission as a university dedicated to social justice.

Dr. Stuart Fagan, president from 2000-2007, contributed greatly to building a twenty-first century university. Dr. Fagan's legacy includes protecting the natural environment, expanding the sculpture park, emphasizing connections between university-based

research and the economic development of the region, developing GSU's first doctoral degree in physical therapy, and establishing high quality as the byword for all GSU academic programs. On a personal note, I thank Dr. Fagan for a smooth and seamless presidential transition.

As I am officially invested as Governor State University's fifth president, I am deeply honored to celebrate legacies of four distinguished predecessors. Inspired by the mythical phoenix, we will imagine the future and reinvent a great people's university, built where the prairie meets the city.

Now, let us imagine. Imagination differs from fantasy. To imagine means to envision experience in a new way - with an artist's eye. I imagine that during this administration, we will create a model twenty-first century university. We will build a Public Square defined by SEVEN IMPERATIVES:

**The First Imperative:**

**GSU will expand access to underserved student populations.**

Our enrollment will grow. We will increase the pipeline of students now lost to university education. More first-generation students will become life-long learners. They will achieve baccalaureate degrees and go on to graduate study. We will cooperate with K-12 institutions and community colleges, improving preparation for university study and creating an environment for student success.

We commit to providing first-generation college students with all benefits of university education - experiences that students from more privileged backgrounds take for granted. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), represented here today by its President Dr. Carol Geary Schneider, has highlighted disturbing inequities. First-generation college students take fewer courses in the humanities, social sciences, mathematics, and computer science than students from college-educated families.

First generation college students believe that they must major in something that sounds like a job. Students from college-educated families prepare for careers but understand the value of a strong liberal arts education. GSU will be a social justice university by providing opportunity for the highest level of university achievement to students underrepresented and underserved in higher education.

**The Second Imperative:**

**GSU will be a student-centered university.**

As we make future plans, we will always ask, “How will decisions affect students?” Are instructional designs fulfilling twenty-first century requirements? Do our calendar and class schedule address students’ needs? Are we doing everything possible to immerse students in the life of the university? Are we offering research partnerships and participation in stimulating new experiences?

We will put students first.

GSU will not be an ivory tower or a university on a hill. GSU will be a Public Square - open and accessible. But those who study in the Public Square have responsibilities, too. For example, in the spirit of our ongoing voter registration campaign, we are committed to infusing civic engagement into instruction and co-curricular activities university-wide.

Being student-centered does not imply lowering academic standards. It means the opposite. Being student-centered means respecting the student’s right to the highest quality education. Students will be challenged - and guided - to achieve, often beyond their initial expectations. We must ensure that their diplomas are respected as evidence of their transformational educational experiences.

**The Third Imperative:**

**GSU will be a model organization that asks, “Why not?” and listens.**



Some of us remember that Robert Kennedy ended every stump speech by saying: “Some men see things as they are and ask, ‘Why?’ I dream of things as they never were and ask, ‘Why not?’”

One year after Robert Kennedy’s death, Governors State University was founded, encompassing that “Why not?” spirit - constructive, forward-looking, and problem-solving in our orientation. That is our heritage.

As you may know, since mid-September, we have been conducting a successful “Why Not?” campaign. This project empowers everyone to question - to ask why not do certain things differently, more effectively. Asking why not is a core value of the academy. It helps us to sort out necessary processes from bureaucracy and to distinguish traditions from habits. In a brief time, the “Why Not?” campaign has gathered hundreds of constructive suggestions for making GSU more transparent, more student-centered. We have already implemented some new ideas. We will continue to do so. The goal is transformative. We will be problem-solvers, not gatekeepers. In the Public Square, we are empowered and accountable, as we work for the public good.

**The Fourth Imperative:**

**GSU will help unify the Chicago Southland, as well as Will, Kankakee, and the rest of Cook County.**

GSU is the only public university in the south suburbs of Chicago and in all of Will and Kankakee Counties.

Many express hopes that this university will help unify the incredible diversity around us. Without a sense of community, growth is merely sprawl; development is exploitation. The Southland and Will and Kankakee Counties can be a beautiful mosaic or a hodgepodge. Education is the key. Great communities need great universities to be engines for economic, educational, and cultural health. GSU will be that engine and unifying force in ways more evident and more tangible than ever before. The university will be a Public Square for the region.

**The Fifth Imperative:**

**GSU will apply expertise in research, scholarship, and creative activity to help solve real-world problems.**

This priority transcends traditional definitions of applied research. The key is mutuality. The university listens to the community and works in partnership to define research issues. That research is then integrated into our teaching and community service missions. Our professional doctorates will be research-based and developed in partnership with the professions. Our first doctorate in physical therapy exemplifies that. Doctorates in occupational therapy and nursing practice will be approved soon. We have, in the works, a multi-disciplinary, multi-college doctorate in leadership, serving a variety of professions, including K-12 administrators.

Research, teaching, and community service will be integrated in the Public Square.

**The Sixth Imperative:**

**GSU will be committed to a seamless educational experience, pre-school to graduate school (P-20), with special emphasis on partnerships between GSU and community colleges.**

Education is a web of complex interconnections. K-12 institutions prepare students for higher education; universities prepare teachers for K-12 institutions. Everyone in education serves the public good by working on ways to cooperate up, down, and across the curriculum.

My first priority as GSU's president has been to meet with the presidents and provosts of our partner community colleges. My goal is to learn how GSU can improve the record of baccalaureate completion for students who begin their college careers at community colleges. Each community college, true to its unique location and mission, has excellent suggestions for working together.

I envision a Community College Compact.

GSU will continue to listen and learn from our community college colleagues. We intend to share facilities and faculty, to recruit jointly at high schools, and to coordinate

advising. Our shared goal is to increase the number of community college transfers attaining a bachelor's degree, and beyond.

**The Seventh Imperative:**

**GSU will provide a debt-free baccalaureate education for local community college transfer students at the poverty level.**

We are working toward this goal now. We will reach it soon.

Nationally, the vast majority of minority students begin college careers in community college. Of those who start with the hope of completing a four-year degree, only 10 percent accomplish that goal within six years. If we extend the window indefinitely to fifteen years or more, the percentage rises only to 15 percent. Furthermore, a study entitled, *Access Denied*, by the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, reports another disturbing finding. Twenty percent of the highest achieving students, from families at the lowest income level, do not attend college at all. Think about that. Consider the implications for our nation in terms of untapped talent and social justice.

Fear of debt is a major obstacle to motivating poverty level, first-generation college students to complete college. When we say "financial aid," many students hear "loans," even though outright grants are available. Many do not complete the form, called FAFSA, which establishes eligibility for all public scholarship grants. Instead, they take on additional jobs and take fewer courses. Often the extra pay decreases their eligibility for grants, and taking fewer courses makes them less likely to finish their degrees - ever. Talk about a Catch-22.

To address this problem, this August we initiated a special campaign. The intention is to supplement funds available to Illinois' poverty-level students from federal and state sources through an endowment, The GSU Promise. I am pleased to announce that my husband Mort and I have contributed \$10,000 to this endowment in honor of my predecessor, Dr. Stuart Fagan.

We aspired, by today, to raise the first \$100,000 for the endowment and for the necessary infrastructure to sustain it. We are proud to announce that the Chicago Community Trust has approved a grant of \$25,000 to support this leadership initiative. Thanks to Chicago Community Trust President and CEO, Terry Mazany, who is here today as a delegate from his alma mater, the University of Arizona. I am proud to announce that we have today raised \$102,000 for the GSU Promise Endowment, exceeding our goal. We have much more to do and many more students to serve. Please participate.

Let us imagine together these seven imperatives for GSU's Public Square. We cannot become what we cannot imagine. Universities - and people - are transformed by imagination.

Expand access to underserved students. Be student centered. Be an institution that asks, "Why not?" Lead in unifying the region. Use research to solve real world problems. Create a seamless educational experience - from preschool through graduate school. Provide a debt-free baccalaureate education for poverty-level students. That is our vision.

But a vision without a strategy is a fantasy. GSU has embarked on an invigorating strategic planning process that will create a blueprint for strategic investment and transformational change, a process designed to translate this vision into reality.

Now the work begins. We are engaged with the fulfillment of the American Dream. Nathan Manilow surveyed the open prairie, where the prairie god still held sway, and imagined a Public Square, civilizing the prairie through landscaping, art, and education.

The prairie in America's Heartland has symbolic resonance with our nation as a whole. Carl Sandburg, poet of the prairie, understood that the phoenix lives here and symbolizes America. He wrote:

"I see America, not in the setting sun of a black night of despair ahead of us. I see America in the crimson light of a rising sun fresh from the burning, creative hand of God. I see great days ahead, great days possible to men and women of will and vision."

I see great days ahead for GSU. We have the will. We have the vision. It will come true.

Thank you for being here today to remember and to imagine in the Public Square.