Robert Bruce, you are retiring this July 1st as president of Widener University after twenty years of institution shaping service not only to Widener, but to all independent colleges and universities in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and in the nation. While Wilkes and Widener are friendly rivals in athletics, you have helped bring our two institutions—which have so much in common—to a new frontier of academic program collaboration that will benefit students in the regions we serve. You were a crucial force in the Commonwealth's decision to confer university status on Wilkes College when you served as a member of the visiting team that recommended this designation to the State Office of Education. As an also departing president after seventeen years, I can say that no personal and professional relationship with my brother and sister presidents in Pennsylvania has been more supportive, more productive and more enjoyable than ours. The role of college president is vital, particularly in tuition-dependent, private, non-sectarian institutions like Wilkes and Widener. Your accomplishments at Widener have been nothing less than transformative.

You brought to the new Widener University in 1981, just two years after its naming but 160 years after the founding of the first of its several predecessors institutions, the liberal arts orientation of a history major and a 1959 graduate of Colby College in Maine. After you received your Master's degree from the University of Massachusetts in Boston in 1964, you received a Fulbright Grant to the United Kingdom where you studied at the University of Manchester while continuing to teach history at both the school and college levels, a profession you commenced immediately after graduating from Colby. You returned to your alma mater and began a career in fund raising that has been one of the most successful in our generation of college presidents. From Colby you went to Bard College in a development role and before coming to Widener in 1975 served as Bard's Acting President. Your six years as Vice President for Development coincided with the years of consolidation after the Pennsylvania Military College and its predecessor institutions were renamed Widener College in 1972 and finally Widener University in 1979.

You have built a focused, cohesive Widener culture in an institution with three campuses in two states, the main campus being in Chester, Pennsylvania; the other two in Wilmington, Delaware and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania include the School of Law as well as professional programs respectively in Business Administration and Nursing. You created a more traditional university structure to bring the various parts together and as you leave your presidency Widener now has eight schools and colleges, the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Engineering, the School of Hospitality Management, the School of Human Service Professions, the School of Law, the School of Business Administration, the School of Nursing and University College. You have emphasized Widener's graduate mission and now offer fifty-six master's degree programs and five doctoral programs, earning the new Carnegie Foundation classification as a Doctoral/Research University-Intensive Institution. Fifty-one percent of Widener's income now comes from graduate programs.

From the outset of your presidency, you brought the many different elements together into a system of shared governance, marked by an Administrative/Faculty Council that reversed the all too typical "we/they" distrust marking so many of our campuses. Among the descriptions your colleagues use to portray you are brave; a careful business manager (indeed a penny pinching Scotsman); an optimist in hard times as well as good; realistic; sociable, with an irrepressible sense of humor; tolerant of ambiguity; a macro not a micro manager; a delegator while retaining control; a man of strong opinions but a builder of consensus; and knowledgeable of how higher education has evolved in America and where Widener fits in that firmament. Your colleagues
early on recognized your leadership when the Board of Trustees conferred upon you in 1992 an honorary doctorate.

When asked about your greatest source of satisfaction as Widener's leader, you talk both of the Teacher/Scholar model, with undergraduates doing research alongside their faculty, and the Scholar/Athlete, with at least twenty-five Academic All Americans during your two decades as president. With nearly $100,000,000 in capital investments in the physical facilities, one can stand at any vantage point on any of the three campuses and see the hand of Bruce. As a fund raiser and manager you have built the endowment from $1.3 million in 1981 to more than $40 million today. You have maintained the enthusiastic involvement of local business and civic leaders on the Widener Board of Trustees, but you have also significantly increased the participation of successful alumni on the board and in other support activities, thus assuring the future growth of financial support, upon which we both know the true academic distinction of our kinds of institutions will depend.

You have been a leader in helping Chester, an economically depressed community, begin to reverse its fortunes and are working actively with a new, dynamic mayor and city council to attract new industry and involve Widener students and faculty in the reinvigoration of the city. You have been a long-time board member of the local hospital system and are now chair of a combined Crozer-Keystone Board, merging five hospitals with a combined budget of $600,000,000.

I know from our work together in the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Pennsylvania, where you have twice served as our chair through some very difficult days, that you have the ability to draw out the perspectives of all who wish to express themselves while guiding our group towards decisive action with skill and humor. Your leadership in the Commonwealth and in the nation where you have served as chair of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities and as a member of the President's Commission of the NCAA, while perhaps not well known on the Widener Campus, has increased the recognition of and respect for Widener your University among our presidential peers and trustees.

Throughout these challenging assignments, your leadership has been critically enhanced by your wife and partner of more than four decades, Judy Bruce, who is your most important sounding board, who knows how to cut the gordian knot of seemingly intractable problems, and whose warm hospitality to all Widener constituencies-and her candor even exceeds yours-has helped nourish that sense of trust that has marked your presidency.

It is a particular pleasure, therefore, by powers conferred upon me by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and by the Board of Trustees of Wilkes University, to confer upon you, Robert J. Bruce, the degree Doctor of Humane Letters, Honoris Causa, with all the rights and privileges appertaining thereto.