

President M. Roy Wilson
Wayne State University
LA SED Luncheon
May 3, 2018

INTRODUCTION: What we share with LA SED

It's an honor to be here today for LA SED's annual recognition luncheon. As president of Wayne State University, I can say that this year's theme, "Empowering the Community through Education," is certainly close to my heart.

In today's world, education is paramount. Numerous studies show that a college degree offers the surest path toward middle class prosperity. The social mobility made possible by higher education is the key to a thriving middle class and a democratic society. If that mobility is offered to some, and not others, we create two societies, with disparate incomes and vastly different opportunities. This hurts students, but it also hurts society.

But students first have to *get* to college before they can earn a degree and all the opportunities that affords, and there are many important steps, and people, and organizations necessary to helping them do that. LA SED is one of those organizations. We share your passion for education.

WSU HISTORY OVER 150 YEARS

WSU and LA SED have a lot in common, and part of that is our mutual history in Detroit. Speaking of history, Wayne State University is celebrating an important milestone. 2018 is our sesquicentennial – our 150th anniversary.

We opened our doors in 1868 as the Detroit Medical College. Our founders were a group of doctors who had seen the carnage of the Civil War, and thought there must be a better way to teach and administer medicine. We are now a premier, urban, public research university with more than 27,000 students. But in some ways we are still the Detroit Medical College, and the spirit of our founding – *to create and advance knowledge for the betterment of others* – is a mission that still drives us.

A big anniversary allows us a period to assess where we have been, and where we are today. To view ourselves in a longer context, and envision a brighter future.

First and foremost, we proudly celebrate our first 150 years in the heart of Detroit. Other universities are opening offices in the neighborhood, and that's a good thing—Detroit could use the talent. But Wayne State is the only public university that began in Detroit and has *remained* in Detroit — a city that has seen its share of highs and lows, and is in the middle of a historic re-invention – owing in part to the work of many in this room today.

Like our hometown, Wayne State is undergoing its own transformation. We continue to make great strides in meeting the goals of our five-year strategic plan. Enrollment remains strong as we welcome increasing numbers of new students every fall. Our six-year graduation rate is rising at a remarkable pace, and our African American graduation rate is more than double what it was just a few years ago. The graduation rate for Latino/Latina students has increased by 7 percentage points over the past six years, and we are accelerating our progress. In fact, we

expect a big jump of another five to eight percentage points in just this year alone. Our Pivotal Moments fundraising campaign is very near its \$750 million goal. Research programs are accelerating with broad impact for the communities we serve, and our financial health is stronger. We continue to live our values of diversity and inclusion.

We've got a great history. We're in the midst of a transformation, but some things we want to leave just like they are. A big one is our commitment to engagement with the community. Wayne State shares an inextricable bond with Detroit. Part of that engagement is a legacy of access that runs deep in our history.

Detroit, at the turn of the last century, was one of the most diverse cities in the nation. The city had a high proportion of immigrants and first-generation families, along with a solid Jewish community. After World War II, the African American population grew considerably in Detroit as did the Arab-American and Latino populations. Throughout its long history, Wayne State has been the university of choice for Detroit's often marginalized populations. And we're making a difference.

Two years ago, the New York Times issued an Economic Mobility Report ranking more than 2,000 U.S. colleges and universities for how well they take students from lower-income families and propel them into the upper. The overall mobility index in this report reflects both access and outcomes, representing the likelihood that a student moved up two or more income quartiles.

Which public university ranked best in Michigan on this index? Wayne State.

More than our peers, we are delivering on our promise of improved opportunity and a better life for a broad spectrum of Michigan's students – including many of Michigan's best, as well as many of its most socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Today, our history of inclusion is even more critical, as the politicization of immigrant populations has torn apart families and communities. We have been clear on this. Not long after the 2016 election, Wayne State joined more than 600 colleges and universities in signing a statement calling for the DACA program to be continued and even expanded. Our position remains unchanged: we continue to protect student privacy and do not share private information unless required by law. Similarly, we do not require students to disclose their immigration status. We value the presence of all members of our campus community and are proud of our diverse student body.

It helps us all become better people and scholars. It enriches our campus and our education. And most of all it is a moral imperative—an increasingly urgent one. We've become aware very recently that seven U.S. states are working to outlaw DACA, although Michigan fortunately isn't one of them. I also learned that there have been three academic studies published very recently that have examined this notion of predatory immigration only to find it isn't true. Immigrants are people, not criminals. And they will continue to be welcome at Wayne State University.

Driving all of this is our mission, some of which I mentioned a bit earlier: “To create and advance knowledge, prepare a diverse student body to thrive, and positively impact local and global communities.” This is why we get up in the morning. To ensure that every student has an opportunity to succeed. We’ve come a long way in 150 years, and are squarely focused on serving our mission.

LA SED/CLLAS

Next year I no longer have to say “sesquicentennial.” But LA SED will need to say “Semicentennial.” It’s a bit easier to say, but still challenging to say 10 times quickly. This will be *your* moment to pause and think about all you do. Allow me to express my early congratulations on this tremendous achievement.

I am inspired by LA SED’s longtime commitment to community and education. I can’t help but think that LA SED’s overall mission — to promote the social and economic development of its community, and to support the achievement of its individuals — is parallel to Wayne State’s. We share much in common, which is why our partnership feels so natural as we work together to empower people in the community. And it’s why our doors will continue to remain open to students of LA SED.

In 1971, we worked closely with leaders of the Hispanic community to make the Latino en Marcha Leadership Training Program a vital part of our university life. The program, as many of you know, was founded by LA SED in collaboration with New Detroit, Incorporated. Please join me in giving a round of applause to Jane García, chair of the LA SED Board of Directors, and

Shirley Stancato, CEO and president of New Detroit, who are both here with us today. [*Lead applause.*]

That seemingly modest program has since grown up, and is now Wayne State's Center for Latino/Latina and Latin American Studies, one of the oldest and most successful programs of its kind in the country. The Center is widely celebrated for its progressive, community-oriented, leadership development programming, and is a testament to the importance of establishing meaningful, enduring university-community partnerships.

The Center has offered pathways for leadership and career development to countless students, courtesy of courses, workshops, conferences and other educational opportunities. Some of LA SED's Board members are proud graduates of the program.

[Acknowledge Belda Garza, Ago Benavides and Laura Reyes Kopack, all alumni of Chicano-Boricua Studies -- now the Center for Latino/Latina and Latin American Studies]

In fact, I am sure we have a number of other Wayne State, Chicano Boricua Studies and Center for Latino and Latina Studies graduates here tonight. Please stand so we can acknowledge your accomplishment. [*Lead applause.*]

The Center is led by Jorge China, who became a full professor just last week. Through his leadership, the Center has given us much to celebrate. The Center for Latino/Latina and Latin American Studies has served as a training ground for students in Detroit, where their expertise has added immense professional value. Simply put, it has changed the lives of young people by providing them with a quality college education that prepares them to become community leaders — and that's when communities ultimately transform.

I'm sure many of you've heard by now the news that came out yesterday about the DMC and Wayne State going separate ways. This is a momentous change with potential consequences we are still working out, but I want to assure you of two things. First: we will continue to be guided by our values and mission, and our commitment to the community—that will never change.

And second, it will be difficult to close this part of our history and founding as the DMC (Detroit Medical College), and it is not what we wanted; but the next evolution of Wayne State University will be exciting, and ultimately, I think, will be beneficial to the university, to Detroit, and maybe even to DMC's parent organization, Tenet Healthcare.

CLOSING

I mentioned several times that Wayne State and LA SED have a lot in common. That our missions, and our passions align in important ways.

Together, we share:

- A community. Not just the location, but the spirit. We've lived many of the highs and lows together, and are equally committed to building a community where everyone has an equal opportunity to grow and prosper.
- We share a mission to educate. This is at the core of what we do as a university, but it is woven into the stated mission of LA SED. The two work together for the sake of both the individual and the community.
- We share a mission to help people find meaningful careers. To become prosperous and productive citizens.
- We share a passion for Detroit, a city that has fought its way from being a national punching bag to a national marvel.
- And we share a mission to inspire. There's more to life than just getting a job and earning a living. The possibilities in today's world are unlimited, but sometimes they are not apparent. Our job is to open people's eyes to these opportunities. And give them the tools to succeed.

If we can do that, we will have made an extraordinary impact on our community and the world.

And 50 years from now our successors will gather to commemorate our mutual accomplishments at Wayne State's bicentennial and LA SED's centennial. Let's give them something to celebrate.

Thank you.