Despite the weather, it’s a wonderful day in a wonderful week which began on Monday night at 11:48pm with the birth of my granddaughter, Kennedy.

Thank you all for making a special effort to be here. Speaking of weather, Rabbi Sussman is not responsible… he’s in sales not marketing!

I also I want to say is “thank you” – to the presenters who have already spoken here today; to the committee that planned and put together this wonderful event, particularly to the co-chairs, George West, Professor of Business Administration and a former President of this institution, and Betsy Arrison, our Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students; and to Betsy’s administrative assistant, Lex Islinger, who, as with so many administrative assistants (Angela Reckner comes to mind here), …They are the unsung heroes behind this occasion and much else in their boss’s daily administrative lives.

Thanks also to my new colleagues: the trustees, faculty, alumni, students and staff of Delaware Valley College who have made DelVal what it is today, and to my old friends from Columbia University’s Teachers College, and those from other parts of my life who have traveled here for this occasion. To my fiancée, Carla, and her son Brennan; to my family and extended family – particularly my mother, Mary Brosnan; my daughter, Michelle and her children, Elizabeth and Alex; and my son, Steven, who is here, and his wife, Jessica, who is not because SHE IS THE ONE WHO HAD THE BABY. Special thanks, as well, to Rabbi Lance Sussman, my niece, Anna Williams, and my cousin, Fr. Tom Brosnan, for making a special effort to be part of this ceremony. It means so much to me to see you all here.

Since I started at the college last August, I have met with hundreds of people. I often ask them their opinions and perceptions of DelVal. I hear time and time again that DelVal is a hidden gem. However, while most perceive us positively they know very little about who were are. Most think of us as “that little old farm school in Doylestown.” We are much misunderstood. We are so much more than our image, and I believe it is important to get our story out.

So today I want to talk about where we came from, who we are, and where we need to go. Because I was a history major in college, I have a very strong belief in the past as prologue. For that reason, I’d like to start by sharing some of the very rich history of this institution, because while much has changed in 112 years, much about the college’s beginnings also speaks to the present moment, and to the future.

The idea for Delaware Valley College was born in 1894 when Joseph Krauskopf, the young rabbi of Philadelphia’s Congregation Keneseth Israel, traveled to Russia and sought out the great writer, Count Leo Tolstoy. Krauskopf was a man ahead of his time – one of the leading exponents of Reform Judaism in the United States, a self-made intellectual, philosopher and social activist who was already speaking out on issues ranging from slums and child labor to conservation and universal education. Krauskopf was concerned about the plight of struggling Russian Jewish families, and he had a
plan to help resettle them in rural, undeveloped areas of Russia. But Count Tolstoy was afraid that the Russian
government would oppose the plan. Instead, he counseled Krauskopf to create farm schools in the U.S. and encourage
Jews from urban areas – both in America and elsewhere – to come and learn agricultural skills.

Krauskopf returned home and raised enough money to buy a 100-acre farm near Doylestown, Pennsylvania. On
April 10th, 1896, the National Farm School opened its doors, boasting a faculty of two and a student body of six. (I’d like
to point out that that’s a three-to-one student-faculty ratio – even then we were setting the bar high!). As the school’s
name made plain, farming, from the very first, was the order of the day. And yet the seeds of a broader focus – if I can be
permitted an agricultural metaphor – were planted from the very first.

Reporting on the new institution in 1897, the New York Times spoke of “the national character of the undertaking.”
The newspaper also noted that the school would be “non-sectarian,” and that “they will have both the theory and practice
of scientific farming.” The Times further stated, “They will divide the day between actual farm labor and intellectual
discussion.” Thus there was to be no artificial distinction between academic and practical experience.

It was an approach rooted in the broader view – espoused by perhaps America’s greatest educational philosopher,
John Dewey, that meaning and understanding are created in the doing, and that learning is not and should never be a tame
process in which students passively absorb distilled wisdom.

Beyond the specific study of agriculture, Krauskopf also imbued the college with the values of disciplined
scholarship, good citizenship, tolerance, environmental appreciation, and lifelong learning. Those values took root in the
hearts and mind of those early students.

In 1946, James Work, a graduate of the class of 1913, returned as president and began to strengthen and expand our
academic program. Over the ensuing years, we would add programs in Biology, Chemistry, Business Administration,
Liberal Arts, Mathematics, Criminal Justice Administration and Secondary Education. Today we offer some 42 majors at
the graduate and undergraduate level. Along the way, we took the name “Delaware Valley College.”

The college is now poised to extend its sphere of influence beyond anything even the founder could have imagined.
One just needs to read the headlines in any major newspaper to see that the international demand for expertise in
disciplines related to biodiversity, sustainability and precision farming methods multiplies exponentially each year. It is
important to note that these needs are at the core of what we do. At the same time, the local, regional and global
marketplaces increasingly seek out well-rounded graduates with liberal arts, education, and business backgrounds to be
the leaders of the future.

So with all this variety and breadth, who are we, at our core? How do we remain connected to our founder’s initial
vision – and does that matter?

I would submit that it matters very much. And the good news is that, on many levels, the connection to our past
remains both transparent and powerful.

While our focus has broadened, DelVal continues to emphasize the highest-quality, hands-on experiential learning
in all of the disciplines it offers. We prepare students for leadership roles in service to the community, the state, and the
nation by emphasizing scholarship fused with citizenship, the academic mixed with the practical and by instilling a belief
in the necessity of lifelong learning.
Many of our strengths also remain unchanged. DVC is still all about faculty/student relationships. Our students are taught by experienced professors, not by TA’s. And this is still a place where our students work for what they get; they don’t have a sense of entitlement. These are attributes that are increasingly rare at American colleges.

All of this is reflected in DelVal’s standing in American education. This past fall, our incoming freshman class was the largest ever, boasting the highest GPA and average SAT scores in our history. Again this year, we have been recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* as one of the top 25 comprehensive colleges in the northeast. These aren’t my accomplishments – they predate my time here – but hey, I can still brag!

Because of the far reaching vision of our founder and the leadership of educators like James Work, Joshua Feldstein and many others, DelVal is not just a little farm school any more. And I believe our founder would have been very proud of that!

So there is much to celebrate -- and yet, there are challenges. Inevitably, with so much growth and expansion has come some confusion about our purpose. There are ways in which we sometimes lack a clear focus – not in the work conducted by any of our individual programs and departments – but in the ways that those programs and departments relate (or sometimes do not relate) to one another. The parts are all in working order, but they do not always add up to something greater than their sum. We do not always make the most of our opportunities.

And so, I believe, we need a vision for Delaware Valley College that integrates all the different aspects of the institution.

Now, you may say, who is this Irish guy who lived on the Upper West Side of Manhattan until a year ago – who is this newcomer to come tell us his vision for an institution with 112 years of tradition? And the answer is that I’m not here to tell you that. I am here to engage the entire DelVal community in creating a shared vision, because, as my good friend Warner Burke, a faculty member at Teachers College, likes to say, people only support what they hope and help to create.

And so, today, I am formally sounding the call for a searching examination of DelVal that will ask, among other questions:

- What are the environmental, social, political and economic challenges facing our graduates, and what do they need to know and learn in order to be productive citizens in the 21st century?
- What should constitute a DVC education in the next 25 years?
- What are the common threads that bind together the totality of DVC? And, more importantly, how can we knit these threads into a compelling call to action which will:
  - Best focus our energies in service to our students?
  - Mobilize to help our region, our nation and the world meet the challenges of this new century?
  - And enable us, as an institution, to move from being merely very good to becoming truly great?

These questions have been posed at DelVal before but this time we must work together and commit the necessary resources to answer them. And we must use empirical research to back up our conclusions when it is feasible to do so.

As I said earlier, I’ve spent the past nine months talking with many of you and, more importantly, listening. And what I can tell you, as a result of those conversations, are some of the key opportunities and challenges that a shared vision for DVC must address.
First is the need for an integrating principle. By that I don’t mean some sort of pronouncement about which prescriptive course of study represents the true DelVal. An integrating principle is NOT about whether our students take agriculture or business or chemistry or education or liberal arts. Instead, it’s about who our students must become by the time they graduate – the habits of mind and the skills and attitudes, they must have in order to be prepared for life in the 21st century and not just narrowly trained for their first job.

This leads to another set of challenges – at the head of which I put “engaging with the community.” I want this college to be an intellectual and economic resource for Doylestown, this region, and this State. Certainly we do that now, through such partnerships as

- The Pennsylvania Biotechnology Center of Bucks County, which we operate jointly with the Hepatitis B Foundation under the superb leadership of Dr. Timothy Block.
- Our “Bucks Back” program, created with Citizens Bank and the Bucks County Foundation, in which our students help eligible area residents prepare their tax returns and identify savings in earned income tax credits that can substantially affect their lives;
- Through Professor Eve Minson and her student s’ work with the Heritage Conservancy right here in Doylestown;
- And through our alliance with Vail Garvin and the Chamber of Commerce, including a substantial Small Business Administration grant we coordinate for online professional education targeting small businesses in Bucks County.

But we need to do more – much more – and we will, both by reaching further out into the region, and the Northeast in general, and by looking for connections that truly become part of our curriculum and research, and that make the College an intellectual resource for our geographic area.

Equally important is the challenge – and opportunity – of engaging internationally, because our students will be living in a global, interconnected economy and world. Again, we do a great deal already in that regard, including our work in assisting the University of Ulster in Belfast, Northern Ireland, to develop a Masters Degree Program there in Food and Agribusiness; the Cooperation Agreement we maintain with Beijing Forestry University and The People’s Republic of China; our Tropical Ecology Course in Costa Rica; and our exchange program with the University of Podlasie in Poland, named in honor of Mr. Edward Pizek, founder of the Copernicus Society of America.

These are excellent efforts, but we must create others that are even more substantive – that offer our students in-depth residential experiences – that are powerful academic and cultural programs, and that stand as models for 21st century international education.

The bottom line is that we need to have more international students matriculating here at DelVal, and more of our own students doing the same abroad…. and, in particular, putting their leadership skills and their business and agricultural education to work in the developing world. For we have much to teach about basic agronomy, food production and environmental management, and equally as much to learn about the huge food provision failures and energy source issues in many of these regions.

I want to stop on that last idea for a moment – the notion that we have as much to learn from people in other countries as they do from us. Because implicit in that challenge is still another one: the need to foster a truly broadminded climate here at DelVal characterized by diversity, tolerance and respect for the dignity of all the members of the human
family. For if we are to reap the benefits of engaging with new mindsets and disciplines, we will need to set aside our cultural and intellectual preconceptions and open our hearts and minds to what is genuinely new.

This isn’t just the right thing to do, in some politically correct sense – it’s what we must do to fully enrich our college and ourselves.

And it’s also our legacy – for although Krauskopf founded this institution primarily with the needs of young Jewish men in mind, he insisted from the first that the school be open to all faiths and backgrounds. It was the same breadth of perspective that made him, as I have already described, a social activist who believed that education should address the needs of all people and that made this institution, as the New York Times wrote in 1897, truly national in scope.

Indeed, without that kind of mindset, we won’t be able to take on perhaps the most important challenges of all – the ones that go beyond our institution, that face the entire human race. Challenges such as:

- how to function in, regulate, and prepare for the impact of a global economy;
- how to deal with massive public health challenges;
- how to deliver education to the much broader world audience that now hungers for it;
- and how to deal with the growing threat to our environment.

Let me focus on that last issue for a moment, because it is so clearly an area in which DelVal can – and, I believe, must – realize its potential to make a major impact. Again, I turn to our own history for precedent.

In 1926, through the auspices of one of our trustees, Abraham Erlanger, DelVal convened a five-day conference in New York City of leading educators, agriculturalists and Governors’ and Mayors’ representatives from nearly every city and state in the Union. The purpose of the event, which was widely reported by newspapers throughout the country, was to present and analyze the importance of new trends in agriculture such as: the influx of men and women from farms to cities; the depletion of the rural population; the growing role of women in farm management; and much much more.

As Herbert Allman, another president of this institution, would later say, it was a watershed moment for DVC. At a time of profound change, the college was fulfilling perhaps the most important function of an institution of higher learning: that of a neutral convener, an honest broker of ideas that brings together experts from across disciplines to study complex issues and explore solutions to significant societal problems.

I believe we are at an analogous moment today, when the rapid and unchecked growth of the world’s population, and of businesses and political entities, is having a profound impact not merely upon agriculture, but the environment as a whole. The world economy is projected to grow by over 400 percent in the next 40 years. Population growth is expected to be in the neighborhood of 50 to 75 percent.

As my friend and global thinker Michael Gallis states: “Even as geographic and political borders continue to be redefined, the world is remapping itself economically into new global trading blocs.”

And all of these changes are having a profound impact on the environment. Yet as causes of change, they aren’t merely environmental problems. They are human network problems as well. As such, they require us to develop multifaceted solutions that reach across a range of disciplines. And that, of course, makes them education problems, as well.

The central issue on the table is no longer that of environmental sustainability; while very very important, sadly, the moment for that discussion has come and gone. Instead, the need now is for discussion of environmental restoration –
repair of damage already done – and for education that is not only scientific in nature, but that also emphasizes the social responsibilities that all of us – individuals, businesses, political entities – must shoulder.

DelVal is well positioned to help convene that conversation – certainly on a regional scale, and hopefully, as in the past, as a player on the national stage. With that in mind, I am proud to announce that during the coming year, DVC will host an externally funded, national, perhaps international, symposium. It is tentatively titled: *Beyond Sustainability: The Need for Environmental Restoration*. This event will bring together experts from inside and outside the college, in our core areas of study – agriculture, business, the liberal arts and sciences, and education – to address the broad range of issues embedded in this important topic and to identify practical ways to realize the admonition that we must “Think Globally…Act Locally.”

The idea for this event grew out of a meeting I had with about 15 faculty members from across DelVal’s curriculum. I approached this group with hopes of winning their buy-in for a conference of this kind. To my surprise and delight, they decided to go me one better by proposing that we commit to the establishment of an Institute at DelVal, interdisciplinary in nature, that will continue the conversation and take on the issue of environmental restoration – of how to repair systems that are breaking down.

I am thrilled with this idea both because I believe it is right for our times and our institution and also because it gets back to the notion I raised earlier: it is the beginning of developing an integrating principle for DelVal. But in order to realize its full potential an Institute such as this needs to have external partners as well. And for DelVal this is an opportunity for outreach.

I envision having many partners, from large research universities and small, regional private and community colleges, to local and national conservation and environmental groups. I also see us working with regional and national educators at the K-12 level, I would also include in this endeavor media and health professionals, business leaders and seminal thinkers like those sharing this stage with me this afternoon, as well as, a number of you who are in this audience today. You know who you are. . . I’ll be in touch!

None of this will happen overnight. In both our efforts to fashion our own future and our work to remake the world, we must remember that change is incremental. As my new friend and alumnus Tom Watson likes to say, “Rome wasn’t built in a day – but it was built.” Or as Admiral Hyman Rickover once said, “Good ideas are not adopted automatically. They must be driven into practice by courageous patience.”

So thank you again for being here today – and for your OWN courageous patience in listening to me. I’ve done a lot of talking today, but I assure you that I intend to continue listening in the months and years ahead.

I hope you are as excited as I am about the future of this great institution. I hope that, when we all look back, many years from now, we remember this occasion not merely as the inauguration of a new president, but as a moment of synthesis between our past and present.

Because the challenge before us is clear: On this 150th anniversary of his birth our founder’s vision is alive and well. It is up to us to realize it once again in a different time.

Thank you.